

Vrbes Extinctae

**Augenti, Andrea; Christie,
Neil;**

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Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Towns

Edited by

NEIL CHRISTIE and ANDREA AUGENTI

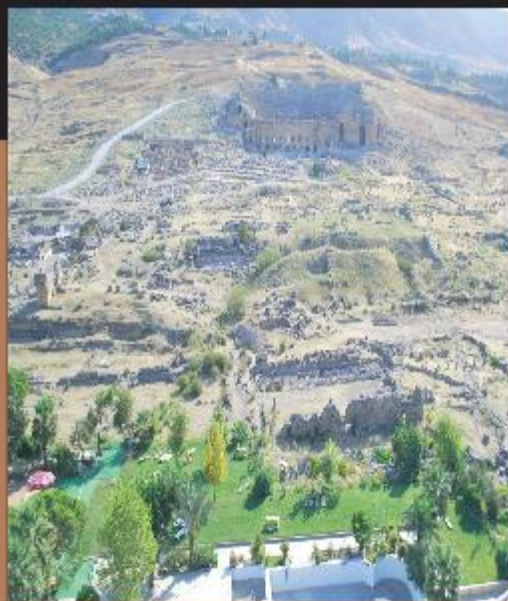


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Preface and Acknowledgements

This volume derives partly from a day conference held on Saturday 13 May 2006 at the University of Leicester and organised within the School of Archaeology and Ancient History on the theme of 'Urbes Extinctae: Archaeologies of Abandoned Classical Sites'. This conference was organised as part of a series of events in 2006 funded by a major Culture 2000 European Union grant overseen by RavennAntica (<http://www.ravennantica.it>): core to the programme of events was an extended season of archaeological excavation at the late antique and early medieval church site of San Severo in the port city of Classe, a site set south of the late Roman and Byzantine capital of Italy, Ravenna. The excavations – in part discussed by Andrea Augenti in this volume – brought together archaeologists (staff and students) from the Universities of Bologna-Ravenna, Barcelona, Budapest (Central European University) and Leicester. This enabled fuller exploration and analysis of a structure that stands as one of the very few visible components of an otherwise lost or buried ancient city; its archaeological sequence runs from the early empire into the early modern period, and includes a Roman burial ground and villa, a late sixth-century basilica, tenth-century monastery and royal palace, and a shrunken later medieval church and tower. These excavations (ongoing, and overseen by Professor Augenti of the Dipartimento di Archeologia of the Università di Bologna (sede di Ravenna) form a core component to a wider archaeological study and display of Classe, geared primarily to the creation of an archaeological park that will enable visitors to understand the scale, wealth and fortunes of this now lost city. RavennAntica indeed forms the head of the Fondazione Parco Archeologico di Classe and is actively pursuing this goal; to this end it also sponsors exhibitions in Ravenna itself. The Culture 2000 programme (with its 'kick-off' meeting held in Ravenna on 28 November, 2005) was entitled 'Progetto Classe: archeologia di una città abbandonata', and coincided with the so-called 'Anno di San Severo'. Meetings and day conferences were held also in Budapest, Barcelona and Leicester to facilitate planning and dissemination of the project work and aims.

The theme of the Leicester day conference thus linked into the project's reference to the 'archaeology of an abandoned city'. Scholars from Britain, Spain, Italy and Hungary were invited here to share views on and findings from excavations and surveys of Roman towns that variously failed in the late, or especially, post-Roman period. Case studies examined ranged across the empire (Roman and Byzantine),

including from the provinces of Britain, Gaul, Spain, North Africa, Syria, Pannonia and Italy. Questions raised included: What can the studies of these centres contribute to our understanding of Roman and post-classical urban decay? Why did such towns fail when others continued? How drawn-out were their ends? In particular the conference speakers were asked to think not just about the results of the archaeologies at these sites, but the ways in which techniques of study and perceptions of change and decay have evolved. What were the first views of these sites' ends? How has our understanding evolved through further excavation work? What can new techniques and technologies add? What gaps remain to be explored? The conference identified how current analyses of Late Antiquity and urban change still do not properly address the issue of urban decline and abandonment; we do not normally separate out 'lost' sites from those that persist or we inadequately use the archaeologies of the extinct sites to guide our thinking on the survivors. Extinct towns provide vital laboratories of study: we need to ensure that full methodologies and suited questions are being applied to these or else their resources and potential will be damaged.

Only a few of the papers published here, it should be noted, in fact relate to the conference programme of May 2006: a sizeable expansion of the geographical and chronological coverage has been sought through inviting additional contributors; sadly a couple of the original contributions have not been forthcoming, but it is hoped that the overall range is nonetheless full enough and informative. All contributors are thanked for their papers, revisions and patience. The gap between the conference date and this final publication should not be seen as problematic: the papers are not fixed to fieldwork completed or still active in 2006, but cover work since then and so are current articles of description, discussion and debate.

As editors we thank all the speakers, volume contributors, programme organisers and co-ordinators, fellow partner heads (Professors Augenti, Ripoll and Laszlovszky, Dr Christie), fellow diggers from the San Severo excavation, fellow speakers and workers from the Culture 2000 workshops, and the two anonymous reviewers for the volume's papers (who met all deadlines imposed). Our final thanks to Tom Gray and other staff at Ashgate, notably Senior Editor Kirsten Weissenberg, for taking on and seeing to press this collection of papers, and to Katharine Bartlett for her admirable copy-editing and patience.

NEIL CHRISTIE and ANDREA AUGENTI

Leicester and Ravenna, March 2012

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Andrea Augenti holds the Chair in Medieval Archaeology at the University of Bologna. His research focuses on urban and rural Italy between Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Among many other field projects, he carried out excavations in Rome (Palatine hill) and is now director of the major long-term excavations in Classe (Ravenna). Among his main publications are *Il Palatino nel Medioevo* (Rome, 1996); *Scrivere la città* (with M. Munzi) (Florence, 1997); *Le città italiane tra la tarda Antichità e l'alto Medioevo* (ed.) (Florence, 2004); 'Medieval archaeology in Italy: from prehistory to the present day', in R. Gilchrist, A Reynolds (eds), *Reflections: Fifty Years of Medieval Archaeology* (London, 2009); *Città e porti tra la tarda Antichità e l'alto Medioevo* (Rome, 2010).

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Miguel Ángel Cau is Research Professor at the Institució Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avançats (ICREA) and director of the Equip de Recerca Arqueològica i Arqueomètrica de la Universitat de Barcelona (ERAAUB). His main research interests consist of the archaeology of island systems in Late Antiquity and the archaeology and archaeometry of late Roman pottery in the Mediterranean. His main monographs are: *Cerámica tardorromana de cocina de las Islas Baleares: estudio arqueométrico* (BAR International Series 1182) (Oxford, 2003); (co-edited with J.M. Gurt and J. Buxeda) *Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean. Archaeology and Archaeometry* (BAR International Series 1340) (Oxford, 2005); and (co-edited with M. Orfila) *Les ciutats romanes del llevant peninsular i les Illes Balears* (2004). Around 120 other contributions covering archaeometry and archaeology complete his scientific publications.

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Enrico Cirelli is Research Associate at the Department of Archaeology and Contract Professor at the Faculty of Scienze Matematiche, Fisiche e Naturali of the University of Bologna. His main research interests are currently urban archaeology and late antique / early medieval

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Gallo-Roman Terra Sigillata (Samian Ware). Monograph publications since 2000 include *Late Iron Age and Roman Silchester: Excavations on the Forum Basilica 1977, 1980–1986* (with J. Timby) (2000); *Life and Labour in Late Roman Silchester: Excavations in Insula IX since 1997* (with A. Clarke and H. Eckardt) (2006); and *Pevensy Castle, Sussex: Excavations in the Roman fort and medieval Keep 1993–95* (with S.J. Rippon) (2011).

Vince Gaffney is Chair in Landscape Archaeology and Geomatics in the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity (IAA) at the University of Birmingham. His research interests are broad and include urban and regional studies in many parts of the world, GIS and computer-based applications in archaeology. Recent major publications include ‘Wroxeter, the Cornovii and the Urban Process’ and ‘Europe’s Lost World: the rediscovery of Doggerland’.

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Richard Hodges is the Williams Director of the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and Scientific Director of the Butrint Foundation. Among his main publications are *Dark Age Economics* (London, 1982); *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement* (London, 1989); *Light in the Dark Ages* (London, 1997); and *Goodbye to the Vikings* (London, 2006). Publications in the Butrint series comprise: (edited with W. Bowden and K. Lako), *Byzantine*

Butrint, (Oxford, 2004); (edited with I. Hansen) *Roman Butrint* (Oxford, 2006); and *Eternal Butrint* (London, 2006).

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Isabel Velázquez is Professor of the Latin Department in the Complutense University of Madrid. Her main fields of research are Late Roman and medieval Latin and epigraphy. She is Director of the Archivo Epigráfico de Hispania and the review *Hispania Epigraphica* of the Complutense University and Vice-President of the Latin Studies Society of Spain (SELat). She has published numerous articles and books. Her recent books include *Documentos de época visigoda escritos en pizarra* (ss. VI–VIII) (Turnhout, 2000); *Latine dicitur, uulgo uocant. Aspectos de la lengua escrita y hablada en la obras gramaticales de Isidoro de Sevilla* (Logroño, 2003); *Las pizarras visigodas. Entre el Latín y su disgregación. La lengua hablada en Hispania, siglos VI–VIII* (Madrid-Burgos, 2004); and *La Literatura hagiográfica. Presupuestos básicos y aproximación a sus manifestaciones en la Hispania visigoda* (Burgos, 2007).

Frank M.R. Vermeulen is Full Professor in Roman archaeology and archaeological methodology at Ghent University (Belgium) and, since 2008, part-time Research Professor at the research centre CIDEHUS of the University of Évora (Portugal). In his research two major themes dominate: the archaeology of ancient Mediterranean landscapes and Roman rural and urban settlement history. He has a special interest in non-destructive survey techniques, such as aerial photography and geophysics. He currently directs field projects in Italy (Potenza Valley Survey), Corsica (Mariana) and Portugal (Ammaia). Recent co-authored books include: *Geo-archaeology of the Landscapes of Classical Antiquity* (2000); *Excavations in Pessinus: the so-called Acropolis. From Hellenistic and Roman cemetery to Byzantine castle* (2003); *Thinking about Space. The potential of surface survey and contextual analysis in the definition of space in Roman times* (2008); and *Ol'Man River. Geo-*

archaeological aspects of rivers and river plains (2009). Around 100 papers in international journals complete his scientific publications.

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Chapter 1

Vrbes Extinctae: Archaeologies of and Approaches to Abandoned Classical Cities

Neil Christie

‘Se tu riguardi Luni e
Orbisaglia
come sono ite, e come se
ne vanno
di retro ad esse Chiusi e
Sinigaglia,
udir come le schiatte si
disfanno
non ti parrà nova cosa né
forte,
poscia che le cittadi
termine hanno’

(Dante Alighieri, *Divine Comedy – Paradise*, XVI. 73–79: ‘Consider Luni, Urbisaglia, how they went to ruin (Sinigaglia follows, and Chiusi, too, will soon have vanished); then, if you should hear of families undone, you will find nothing strange or difficult in that, since even cities meet their end’)

Introduction

Ostia, Paestum, Wroxeter, Tiermes, Conimbriga, Gorsium, Naron, Olbia, Timgad, Palmyra, Ephesus, Apameia, Amorion... These are all important sites, well known to many archaeologists and ancient historians, which all played significant roles in the political, economic and religious lives of the provinces in which they lay within the classical and late classical world. Their monuments, inscriptions, streets, tombs, coins and ceramics all help tell stories of urban origins, growth, prosperity, populations, hardships, and decay. They are all, however, ‘lost’ sites in the sense of now being abandoned ruins, devoid of a major modern successor, even if now ‘found’ by archaeologists and tourists alike. To the general visitor these are of course also the ‘classic’ sites, places where imagination can be released and where one can better grasp what it may have been like to live in such a city or town of stone, brick and marble many centuries past; monumental buildings like public baths and theatres may seem

both alien and familiar, but being able to walk into rooms, courtyards and gardens helps populate such spaces with people like ourselves. Roman Pompeii encapsulates so much of this, since the scale of preservation there and its 'frozen' state (even if the eruption of Vesuvius and the subsequent traumas of ash, pumice, heat and dust, were anything but cold) make it somehow more 'real'. Similar are the less well known but equally inspiring abandoned Byzantine 'villages' and small towns in Syria, such as Serjilla, Schinschara and Dehes, with various fine stone-built public and private structures preserved to roof and pediment level, scattered among gardens and fields, and quitted seemingly at pace in the sixth or seventh centuries (Tchalenko 1953–58; Sodini et al. 1980; cf. Dalrymple 1998, 177–84. Stunning aerial photos are presented in Gerster and Wartke 2003, 48–51).

Frequently these sites are the ones that appear as illustrations in text books discussing Rome's decline and fall, and are the core sites exploited when books explore classical urban plans, temple designs, entertainment structures, ancient roads and houses, and so on. They are atmospheric and evocative and point to lost and distant pasts (a nice example is Ascherson 1996, 67–79, who conjures up well the rise, fall, loss and rediscovery of Olbia, the ancient Greek colony on the northern shores of the Black Sea). But for many regions of the old Roman Empire, both West and East, these 'lost' sites are in a minority of centres that failed to continue – if sometimes stumbling – as active urban seats into the post-Roman, early medieval, medieval and modern eras. Thriving and less thriving modern cities and towns such as York, Chester, Paris, Marseilles, Trier, Barcelona, Turin, Sopron, Geneva, Syracuse, Thessaloniki, Ankara, Jerusalem and Djemila have Roman or Greek roots which were planted firmly enough to enable largely continuous human presences and administrative, religious and economic activities: locations at communications nodes (by sea, river and land and combinations of each), the availability of suited hinterlands, the assigning of specific territorial roles, and the gathering of participating elites and populations provided the core ingredients for success, combined, frequently, with provision of artificial defences and human resiliences. Such active and continuous towns are of course far more challenging artefacts: for historians these centres provide ever accumulating documentary sources; architecturally they grow more 'permanent' with bigger buildings and deeper foundations, and yet are ready to regularly re-design themselves; and demographically they spill far beyond any ancient confines and merge with once distinct rural communities. To archaeologists the challenges lie in the impact of this continued growth and modernisation: often substantial loss of ancient deposits; a fragmentation and disturbance of other buried deposits; a detachment

of deposits and urban body parts; restricted access to built spaces; recognition of specific losses (houses, old street fronts, burial populations); sometimes prohibitive depths to early deposits; communication between the scattered data; and urban recession and limited urban development preventing archaeological access. Accordingly archaeological images for some current cities may be underdeveloped, yet in others fairly advanced: thus, for example, for Pavia in northern Italy, despite a good number of archaeological interventions and recognitions through rescue excavations, researched explorations, watching briefs, plus records of finds since the eighteenth century, their scale and scattered nature means a still imprecise understanding prevails of Roman public structures and urban design, late Roman trajectories and urban change in the early Middle Ages prior to the much more tangible twelfth-century cityscape with its walls, street systems, and churches. More is known of church and monastic impositions and growth as these (e.g. Santa Maria delle Cacce, San Sisto, but also the Torre Civica adjoining the cathedral) have been the preferred archaeological focus (Blake 1995; Nepoti 2000). In contrast, major redevelopment in the eastern (Santa Giulia) zone of the historic core of Brescia (c. 60 km distant from Pavia) enabled substantial and highly influential research excavations from 1980 to 1992, providing notable insights into Roman town planning, public monumental evolutions, *domus* evolution and decay, sixth-century depopulation, early medieval housing and burials, eighth-century revitalisation, and medieval religious and economic expansion (Brogiolo 1993 and 1999b, and Brogiolo et al. 2006 as the main excavation and finds volumes, but with many related articles).

In theory, therefore, the 'lost' sites offer far more scope to explore and understand aspects, structures, and sequences of classical and post-classical life which can otherwise only ever be partially traced and interpreted in these continuously occupied towns. At the same time, however, does the failure of a site make the settlement archaeology at these extinct centres less representative? In other words, do the finds and sequences, even if fragmentary, provide a more reliable guide to human efforts to live in and work in towns? Arguably, the answer varies depending on the questions asked: abandoned towns surely will provide the greatest scope to chart urban form and development across the prime periods of classical activity and in particular will reveal much more of private spaces and individual presences, since the private spaces are frequently the most damaged components in the archaeologies of continuously occupied towns. Having available full building plans and being able to recognise relationships with adjoining units and roads, etc. enables discussion on context, neighbourhoods, exploitation of space, services,

and so on. Questions of transitions – from pagan to Christian, from Roman to Byzantine or to early medieval, from stone to timber technology, from wide to narrow economic participation – may also be tackled most easily from exploration of abandoned sites, which may yield more coherent stratigraphic sequences to chart changing material cultures, in contrast with the problem of residuality that affects the archaeologies of active towns. Indeed, the latter reveal how the past urban histories are actively reused, recycled, churned up, dug down into, replaced, remodelled, built over, and cleared, the layering of such activities in some cities like Rome reaching up to 10 or more metres of depth from modern to ancient ground levels. Robbing and reuse are frequently met on abandoned sites too, but on a far reduced scale and will tell us more of non-urban afterlives to these sites rather than the ways that living urban communities persisted and exploited the past.

But each town is different and abandoned sites conform to no norm: their ends vary by context and place; their ends can be drawn out over generations or centuries; their urban status may remain in documents; their ruins may be heavily robbed or selectively exploited; components may persist to dictate specific afterlives, whether religious or military; nature may reclaim some or none of their space. Yet the same is true for living towns: each differs in social, economic, structural and physical trajectory; demographics and their density and wealth will impact on intramural space, suburban growth, investment in buildings and walled space; success will mean greater growth and damage to the underlying past; economic stability may mean growth is restricted rather than substantial; and local, regional and wider roles play a major part in the presence and scale of, for example, markets, industries, religious institutions, and civic structures.

These are issues all archaeologists and historians are aware of. What matters is that despite these differences, each instance provides more information on how classical and post-classical towns looked and worked, the ranges of structures and services in these, and the populations that lived in and used them. The fuller our studies, the fuller and richer the data gathered on all these aspects. *Vrbes extinctae* are therefore vital archaeological resources and while some have suffered already through eager, early exploration, clearance and restoration, the majority retain much that is still to be examined and their careful investigation and assessment are essential. As important are issues of what should be left untouched, ways of preventing damage from people, tourism, animal and environment (notably exposure to the air and climate), and creating suited strategies for study and heritage preservation (see papers in Amendolea 1995 – e.g. Lentini 1995 on the archaeological park for the Greek colony site of

Naxos in Sicily). Below are considered some of the questions we should be asking, with my examples drawn principally from Italy; other papers in this volume explore individual sites from elsewhere in the old Empire (Roman and Byzantine) and show the ways that their archaeologies and landscapes are now being questioned and developed.

Questioning Loss and Decline in Late Roman and Early Medieval Italy

First we might question what is meant by 'lost' or 'extinct'. As noted above, Pompeii is extinct as a Roman town, but hardly lost in modern eyes, and its archaeology and monuments are more than active as points of academic study and touristic admiration. Indeed, its site was long remembered in Roman times and the extended history of exploration of its buried remains and extraction of artworks from the sixteenth century through into concerted excavation campaigns in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is well known (Cooley 2003). Here, too, a modern town gathers round the ancient one, if less immediate than the presence of a modern township directly over nearby Herculaneum. A contrast thus lies with Rome's ports of Ostia and Portus – the latter on private land, its hexagonal harbour a visible feature from planes taking off from Fiumicino airport, and with many remains hidden beneath tree cover; and the former a largely open site, the scene of extensive excavations (with Mussolini a prime mover in exposing much to clear down to solid Roman levels), but with much unexcavated space still under grass to north and south of the displaced river Tiber; here the medieval successor township lies away to the east and does not impinge on the archaeological site. Ostia is of course a site with an extended history, a failed port-town that did not disappear overnight, but saw sizeable changes in its role and population from the third century onward, its economic and mercantile role shrunken as Portus took priority; there was an attraction of elite to the old city in the fourth and fifth centuries, with *domus* and new fountains imposed while other structures faded and were robbed, with ready recycling and storage as well as transfer of marbles, columns, and statuary; then came sixth-century decay (still poorly understood) and likely massive shrinkage of the residual population to a settlement (and Church) nucleus at the Christian basilica of Pianabella in the southern suburbs; this eventually ended with efforts by Pope Gregory to re-found the city, partly as a defended site to counter Arab threats in the mid-ninth century (the present township of Borgo di Ostia is presumed to overlie this *Gregoriopolis*). Here, however, memory of Ostia antica never faded, the site being

regularly exploited and robbed by popes, especially for marble and artworks across the Middle Ages. Its extended life and demise therefore provide much material for debates on late Roman to early medieval change – in public and private space, economics, reuse, Christian imprints, breakdowns in services and amenities – and yet the emphasis has long been on charting the Roman heyday (the core text being Meiggs 1973, revisited in Gallina Zevi and Claridge 1996), if with slowly developing efforts to understand the post-classical archaeologies (NB Paroli 1993 and 1996, with Pensabene 2000 on reuse of marbles, etc.; cf. Coccia 1993 and 1996 on Portus, and Keay et al. 2005 for major project work at the site; see summaries also in Augenti 2010, 39–43).

The Ostia example throws up a series of points and possibilities. Was there a single root cause for the city's demise? Were economic changes the prime factor, in terms of shifting emphasis across to Portus? This may well explain losses in warehousing and some population loss (with port workers, traders, clerks and officials relocating also to Portus), but, arguably, income from trade was also what fuelled the appearance of well-to-do housing in the fourth century at Ostia. The provision of a bishop and substantial episcopal church in the south of the city (at the expense, it seems, of older house blocks), plus the building of other churches, including at suburban Pianabella, reflect likewise an ongoing urban concern. Current survey, allied with small scale excavation work and cleaning in some of the core zones, meanwhile is indicating a town with a much tidier image in c. AD 400 than previously assumed (for the Kent-Berlin project – see <http://lateantiqueostia.wordpress.com/historical-overview/>). Did insecurity play a role in decline? Fifth-century assaults by Alaric's Visigoths and later by Vandals damaged both ports: Portus may have seen a reduced and fortified harbour and port fabric, and more goods may have been trans-shipped to be taken more promptly by canal to Rome, but Ostia may well have faced a loss of its elites, although data for determining when many of the *domus* went out of use are as yet limited. Material finds from domestic deposits and dumps certainly show traded items still circulated in Ostia in the sixth and seventh centuries, although some of the churches had probably deteriorated by then. Insecurity is seen as core in the creation of ninth-century *Gregoriopolis* and the presumed relocation of the residual population (or the importing of new colonists), although Paroli has argued that this fortified centre was as much to safeguard saltworks hereabouts, thereby signifying maintained commercial roles. Certainly, however, the pope chose a new site and did not revive the old one, recognising the latter as unviable except in terms of a quarry for materials.

What also emerges from the Ostia work is that its end was drawn

out, not sudden; there were reductions in space and scale; there were efforts to maintain components of the old (whether public spaces, thoroughfares, baths); there were replacements of the old with new and the rise of new foci (Church impositions inside and outside the walls); recycling of structures and materials were ongoing from the late Roman period; and the site was never in reality 'lost' from view, even if awareness of its content, scale and value diminished. Finally, and as importantly, research at Ostia shows that, while early clearance excavation work has compromised sectors of the site, modern detailed archaeological scrutiny, combined with better knowledge of ceramic sequences, enables more to be seen and said of post-classical activities, even, potentially, in 'restored' areas.



Figure 1.1 Ostia – view across shops, houses, streets and warehouses, with most of the structures exposed and conserved to their second- to early third-century phases (Photo: author)

But other sites can be more thoroughly 'lost' from view, even if their memory or tradition lives on. A strong example in this regard is the recently 'rediscovered' city of Altino or *Altinum* in the Veneto region of north-east Italy (Figures 1.2 and 1.3). While documented in late Roman and Byzantine sources as a city and bishopric, the long-lived tradition holds that the town and harbour were destroyed first in the assaults of Attila in the mid-fifth century and with further, final destructions from Lombard expansion in northern Italy in the first decades of the seventh century (Christie 2006, 334–5). These military events and the ongoing insecurity led the townsfolk from here and other centres like Concordia and Oderzo to uproot and settle in the Venetian lagoons, with the Altino population shifting to the island of Torcello (where the Altino bishop is recorded as resident in AD 639)

(Possenti 2011). Islands like this and the emergent Venice will have been far removed in design and content from the quitted mainland towns, even if the claim exists that residents also took materials to build with them. The settlement shift was also territorial – Lombard conquest displaced Byzantine control and a tactical retreat by soldiery, clergy and varied refugees will have allowed for Byzantine regrouping on the lagoon fringes. Archaeology has, however, much modified this image of mainland depopulation, showing that while some flight probably did occur, some of this was to upland seats like Monselice; and, in addition, some townsfolk showed greater resilience, staying put in the old towns, where churches and burials denote such continuity. For some of these Venetian sites the archaeology also shows environmental changes forcing demographic and settlement realignments from the late Roman period: there was flooding of the main *via Annia* road, river courses were moving, and alluviation was building, thus changing the face of the landscape in these coastal and lagoonal zones – presumably as a result of weakened management of the landscape and river courses, plus perhaps increased rainfall due to climatic change. For Altino this meant mounting problems in maintaining the town and its commercial role; the relocation of people and commerce into the lagoons and its fringes (seats like Torcello, Caorle and Comacchio) could thus even be seen as an orchestrated economic decision (Gelichi 2007; cf. also discussions in the wider paper by Schmiedt 1974).



Figure 1.2



Figure 1.3

Recent detailed air photographic analyses, combined with digital elevation modelling and magnetometer survey results (see below on 'New Methods and Approaches') have brought 'lost' Altino back to some level of life, tracing out a detailed plan of the Roman city with key public monuments (forum, theatres, streets) evident and an array of other structures yet to be deciphered (Ninfo et al. 2009; Mozzi et al. 2011). The work importantly recognises also a substantial main canal running through the town, plus varied lesser channels as well as external waterways; flooding from and silting of these may well have been major players in the economic deterioration of Altino and the cause of its later burial, since then witness to only occasional excavations and finds from agricultural works, these identifying houses, mosaics and especially burial grounds (Mangani et al. 1981, 192–3). The potential of the site – if damaged in places by extended agricultural activity across the area, and with robbing for materials since the Middle Ages to be factored in – is undoubtedly high and would offer archaeologists much in determining whether Attila or the environment were the prime factors in decay, and in seeing when changes first occurred, whether decline set in much earlier than the fifth century, and in what ways the late Roman town's inhabitants sought to adapt – if at all.

Strikingly, one of the 'replacement' urban-trade foci in the lagoonal zone, Cittanova (*Eracliana Civitas Nova*), founded by the Byzantine authorities in the 630s after the Lombard conquest of mainland Oderzo, is also known from aerial photographs, plus field survey and sample excavations. These have identified a rather un-Roman settlement, devoid of stone monuments bar a church and baptistery, but featuring canals and channels in a 'lagoon-like' setting, with wharves and stores communicating with the higher ground. Finds hint at older Roman villas, farms, fields and drainage works in the same landscape, these fields and drains seeing maintained and extended use. But this site was not long-lived, presumably also losing out to Nature and a changing environment. Excavation here would provide fascinating insights into a transitional early medieval trading centre, one removed from the Roman urban image, yet designated as a *civitas* and with a bishop's church to reflect its elevated territorial status (Gelichi 2007, 88–93, 97).

Thus Altino and Ostia comprise examples of extinct towns from the Italian peninsula – the core Roman province and a territory which had had an extended and busy urban face since Greek and Etruscan times. Are these extinctions atypical? What was the scale of loss of Roman towns from the late Empire onwards into the medieval period in Italy? No specific study has attempted to tackle this issue as most work has

been centred on specific sites or on regions rather than on fully mapping out losses in provinces wholesale; basic information for this and for other provinces can be drawn from both the *Tabula Imperii Romani* maps and from those of the Barrington Atlas, although in many cases pinpointing when certain sites fell out of use is not possible without adequate and modern archaeological scrutiny. For Italy, estimates of loss can be as high as a half of Roman urban sites in specific territories of southern Italy (Arthur 1999, 173), and up to a third of towns in Italy as a whole (the total number of towns is here estimated at c. 375–400). Ward-Perkins (1988, 16–17) argued that roughly a fifth of Roman towns in north Italy (the Po valley and Alpine zones) had become largely abandoned by AD 700–800 (c. 20 out of 72), with a notable percentage of these in the lower Piedmont (north-west Italy) region, or ancient western *Liguria* province – where there was, arguably, a rather ‘heavy’ scattering of smallish market towns which had shown little prosperity even in the mid-Empire (La Rocca 1994, 1996). Only a restricted number of sites in this region have seen sufficient excavation, but a few like *Libarna* and *Augusta Bagiennorum* (Bene Vagienna) show decay already from the third and fourth centuries, and most of the urban failures relate to centres which did not secure fourth- or fifth-century bishops. Various sites in the central Apennines show the same fate, including *Veleia* and *Mevaniola*, both serving as a market focus for scattered upland village units (these geared to woodland and pasture exploitation especially), but both with diminished monumental and demographic presences from the third century (Catarsi 2004; Di Cocco 2004). In Tuscany, a contrast exists between north and south, with numerous and early losses in the southern zones of Roman urban implants (e.g. Saturnia, Heba, Cortona, Populonia and Cosa), with successor villages or later forts at best, whereas the more economically independent centres in the north, along the Arno (e.g. Pisa, Lucca) show greater resilience – and an early Church presence too. Later these northern Tuscan sites show Lombard politico-military roles to reflect their relative demographic and economic vitality; in the south, only Chiusi and Siena display similar early medieval activity (Citter 2009, 4, 6; Celuzza and Fentress 1994; see also Fentress and Cirelli, this volume, on Cosa). The image of selective loss is repeated much closer to Rome, in South Etruria and the Tiber Valley, where surveys and excavation have revealed how some centres like the colony at *Falerii Novi* saw their populations drift back to upland and pre-Roman sites, while *Forum Novum* – its name signifying its creation as a market feeding off and supplying Rome – dwindled rapidly into a nominal and ruralised bishopric, preserving little of the monumental fabric (see below). ‘Lesser’ urban sites designed in part as rest-stops and as economic units on routes north of

Rome likewise expired prematurely (Keay et al. 2000; Gaffney et al. 2001; Johnson et al. 2004).

The Tiber Valley/South Etruria sequences must, on many levels, have responded to changes in and by Rome in the late Roman to early medieval periods. The shrinkage of Rome's western Empire in the fifth century, a resultant fragmented economy, heightened military demands, and, as crucially, warfare in the peninsula itself (featuring periodic civil wars, but also telling sieges and captures of Rome by Visigoths and Vandals) all meant a weakened Eternal City, which destabilised her hinterlands. Any urban and market shrinkages provoked in the fourth century will have been accelerated in the fifth. Rome herself could be classified as a partially extinct city for some of the period AD 450–1500: with a vastly reduced population (estimates suggest a shrinkage from the Augustan and second-century high of c. 1,000,000 persons to as few as 15,000 for the seventh century AD), huge areas of the old classical city were either empty and ruinous, barely exploited except for robbing of materials, or avoided due to the danger of falling masonry, and, progressively, former public spaces and even old private quarters were given over to cultivation – as vividly portrayed on rare cityscape drawings of the sixteenth century and similarly still on the well known etchings by Piranesi of the 1740s (see Krautheimer 1980, 62–69, 231ff on the 'disabitato' of Rome). Such empty spaces and classical remnants of course inspired the musings and expansive writings of Edward Gibbon in the later eighteenth century and, over 500 years before him, the *De mirabilibus urbis Romae* ('The Marvels of the City of Rome') of the English scholar Magister Gregorius (Birch 1998, 11–12, 105–6). Recent archaeology and textual investigation too have of course contributed to illustrating the fates of some of the major classical spaces within 'Eternal Rome', such as through detailed studies in and around the Forum of Trajan and the Imperial Fora as a whole (Meneghini 1989, 1993, 2000; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2007).

Contexts of Loss

Various examples have been noted and their downward urban trajectories part discussed above, giving some indication of the factors involved in their demise. But are specific patterns evident in why and how certain towns declined? Below a set of ends or contributory factors to ends are considered.

(i) Warfare

There is, as seen, a contrast to draw between what historians might

have claimed in the late antique or medieval period and what archaeology can show. Warfare, sieges and sacks are a naturally frequent documentary image, often still repeated in textbooks and guides to inspire shock in readers and to reinforce the horrors and impacts of conflict. From famous narratives of sacks of Troy in the tenth century BC, to Veii in the early fourth, Palmyra in the AD 270s, and Amorion in the 1070s, the military termination of a city has been readily accepted by medieval to current scholars. In modern eyes such dramatic loss can be accepted in light of cities being wiped out by atom bombs or abandoned through nuclear leaks; yet alongside these extreme examples are equally striking examples of cities literally rising from the ashes and ruins in post-World War II Europe, despite the massive civilian losses and building destructions inflicted by terror/area bombing and ‘firestorms’ in cities like Hamburg in 1943 and Dresden in February 1945 (Friedrich 2006; *Dresden* 1945). For fifth-century Italy, Germany and Gaul the name of Attila the Hun holds a prominent place in visions of Rome’s Empire’s fall, with urban destructions aplenty assigned to his horde’s devastations. One specific example is Aquileia, whose loss is bemoaned in a late eighth-century poem, attributed by some scholars to the Lombard historian Paul the Deacon:

To lament your ashes, Aquileia, no tears of mine can suffice;
words fail me, bitter grief at heart has taken away my
understanding.

Beautiful, exalted, rich and eminent, you were once famous for your
buildings,

renowned for your walls, but more renowned for your countless
throngs of citizens...

Once you raised your head high in pride, now you lie shunned,
useless,

crushed and in ruins, never to be repaired for all time!...

Once a city of nobles, you have now become a yokels’ cave.

Formerly a royal city, you now survive as a hovel for paupers...

You are put up for sale everywhere throughout the world,

nor is there rest even for those buried in you,

soon their bodies are cast out of the tombs for the sake of their
marble

which is bartered

(*The Destruction of Aquileia*, verses 1–2, 14, 16, 19, trans. Godman
1985, 107–11)

Brutal assault by the Huns against this once major Adriatic port-city
had led to destruction, a flight of its citizens, and the abandonment of

all things great and Roman (cf. Thompson 1996, 159: 'Aquileia was cruelly plundered and razed to the ground'; ditto for *Altinum*, *Concordia* and *Patavium*, with 'their inhabitants led away into slavery': 160). The poem's lines necessarily present a contrast between a then and a now to emphasise the demise of the site, reduced to a minor, impoverished community who seem to quarry the site and its dead for materials. However, the poem ignores en route the survival of elements of the old Roman fabric (such as town walls) and the stunning episcopal church complex, whose mosaics and architecture reveal a lasting, if isolated, residual wealth. Indeed, in this instance, Aquileia failed to revive its prominent urban status, partly because of the state's creation or rather upgrading of an alternative port and defensive and religious focus at Grado, where, for the sixth century, churches especially identify rich investment. Aquileia stuttered on with its churches, monasteries and clerical and service population (and the archaeology suggests some Ostrogothic attention was given to this ancient see), although we remain unclear whether the site still drew in traders, industry and the like (Important re-analysis of Aquileia is by Sotinel 2005, NB [Chapter 5](#) on the fifth-and sixth-century site. See also Marano 2012).

Extended warfare, sieges, imposed garrisons, military stripping of resources, etc. will have damaged many Italian urban sites in the fifth century and especially during the Byzantine-Gothic Wars of the 530s–550s: for the latter, the Byzantine historian Procopius was an occasional eyewitness to some episodes of sieges, conflicts and parleys, and he readily reports towns worn down by sieges, their defenders drained by lack of food, and with the lands around plundered and abandoned (Christie 2006, 364–7). Rome herself suffered multiple sieges and blockades (to city and ports), and Procopius makes reference to a starved population, forced even to resort to cannibalism, to flights by inhabitants and slaves, and, after capture, to acts of vandalism, robbing, enslavement of residents, and razing of sections of the town defences (see Llewellyn 1993, 52–75 for a concise overview of the sieges of Rome and the wars as a whole). Towns like Pesaro and Fano are said to have seen their walls demolished after capture by the Goths, their city innards burnt down and the population forced to flee, only later being refortified and made Byzantine garrison points. And one major episode in 539 saw imperial Milan besieged, captured and razed, the Goths selling off the womenfolk and children prisoners as slaves to the Burgundians, while huge numbers of males ('to the number of at least 300,000') were executed (Procopius' *Gothic Wars*, II, 21.39–42 for Milan; III, 25 for Pesaro and Fano). Atrocities in war must have occurred, although it is recognised that Procopius must have exaggerated numbers to add to

the shock value to readers, blackening further the image of the enemy Ostrogoths. After all, Milan and Rome did recover, albeit sluggishly and albeit with much reduced populations who will have struggled to meet all the demands of rebuilding lives and public edifices. Yet some of the images of destruction may not be over-exaggerated by the Byzantine historian: archaeology has, for example, shown clear evidence for widely depopulated and abandoned spaces within both Brescia and Verona for the second half of the sixth century (Brogiolo 1993, [Chapter 3](#)). For some of these sites, the subsequent conflict between Byzantines and Lombards saw towns damaged further – e.g. Lombard conquest and razing of Padua, Cremona, Mantua, Oderzo, Genoa, and Albenga – and some reduced to mere villages as a result (according to the chronicler Fredegar for the mid-seventh century), others becoming military shells rather than urban seats, and a few being forced to relocate (Brogiolo 1999a, 108–13; La Rocca 1994, 548–50 tidily analyses the labels used by the eighth-century historian Paul the Deacon for these events, varying between lasting loss, significant damage and episodic damage. On urban forms in sixth- and seventh-century Italy, see Zanini 1998, [Chapter 3](#), NB 169–203).

Insecurity indeed seems to have ‘trimmed’ some sites down from urban to military size, sometimes with a relocation of activity (or at least the military, administrative and religious headquarters) to higher ground as at Monselice, Cumae and perhaps Brescia, or to an artificial citadel, such as a fortified amphitheatre – as documented for Spoleto in the Byzantine-Gothic Wars and as might be claimed archaeologically for sites like Lucca, Roselle and Vasto. For Teramo, Roman *Interamnina*, for the later sixth century the site is labelled *castrum Aprutiense* implying a militarised seat: indeed, the archaeology suggests a fortified nucleus which included the cathedral but which ignored key components of the older town plan, its defences thus cutting across the forum area and incorporating, probably, both theatre and amphitheatre in its circuit; material from demolished buildings in the forum area was reused in the defences. There was also a possible fortified tower-house, either used by the local duke or by the bishop – or both (Staffa 1998, 166–71 on such fortresses, burials and urban shrinkage in the sixth- and seventh-century Abruzzo; cf. Ciampoltrini 1994 for Tuscany, and Leone 2007, 191–2 on North African sixth-century urban defensive nuclei). Pope Gregory the Great, towards the end of the sixth century, in the context of ongoing conflict between Byzantines and Lombards, is attested through his own letters as encouraging the creation of safe refuges and citadels (*castra*), with moneys being sent to local bishops (though the bishop of *Misenum* was caught embezzling these moneys) to help fund these. In territories close to Rome there is also an explicit merging of sites – decayed

bishops joining more secure ones, residual populations being relocated from exposed lowland sites to upland and better defended ones such as Orvieto and Civita Castellana, or to military strongholds wherein were located new bishoprics, notably *Balneum regis* – present-day Bagnoregio. As yet the archaeology to prove enforced relocation is awaited, but we should not doubt that the policy reported by the central Church was one largely encouraged (Richards 1980, 100–102). How far this policy was simply formalising a drift that had begun much earlier again needs to be debated further. It might even be the case that it was the local bishops seeking formal permission to reside in a secure fort and no longer in an exposed and decayed town. (A valuable area for comparison is Gaul, where, although some transfers occur, urban losses are generally low, reflecting in part a lower number of towns overall, but also a greater stability to these and one duly aided by Church presences; some episcopal transfers even reverted back to their original seat. Full urban failures were sites of fairly marginal character, frequently upland, whose development had been stunted even in the early Empire. Warfare and insecurity thus played a restricted role; see Loseby 2000.)

(ii) Nature's Losses

Dramatic and sudden loss might also be caused by natural events – something that cannot of course be denied for the urban sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum – and both archaeologists and historians recognise the destructive capabilities of earthquakes. However, archaeologists tend nowadays to be more cautious in viewing earthquakes as causing permanent loss, more often seeking signs of recovery and repopulation, and drawing on evidence of inscriptions to chart restorations by governors, as for mid-fourth-century Samnium in central east Italy where Fabius Maximus oversaw repairs to and rebuildings of damaged baths at the towns of Alife and Sepino (Ward-Perkins 1984, 25; cf. Sanders 2004, 170–72 on seismic damages at Corinth and in Greece more widely for AD 365 and 525. Greater belief in lasting damages and effects at Ephesus, however, comes in Ladstätter and Pülz 2007 – see below. For pre-AD 1000 earthquakes in Italy and the surrounding Mediterranean see Guidoboni 1989). The 2011 earthquake and tsunami devastations to a number of urban and rural communities in eastern Japan provide a highly vivid image of the shock of loss, but also the determination by locals to return and rebuild (see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/japan-earthquake-and-tsunami>; Sendai was the main city affected). Where the means to recover (i.e. economic, human and technical) existed, then renewal over the old could occur. We might note how the Samnium province in the mid-fourth century remained fairly well-to-do and local urban

patronage had not dried up. But what we do not have in economically weaker areas are texts admitting inability to restore; hints only come later when inscriptions might record repairs to buildings damaged or collapsed through age or being structurally unsound. Otherwise we need the archaeological evidence to prove failures to rebuild following quakes and to use that evidence to ask whether this denotes economic or technical inability or else perhaps signifies the local community choosing not to rebuild and to use moneys on other schemes (water supply might count for much more in the 350s than seeking to cover the expenses for a theatre's renewal) (see discussion in Ward-Perkins 1984, NB [Chapter 2](#)). Indeed, understanding when such changes impacted on or dented town fortunes and fabrics is crucial, since the ability of a city to recover from a natural or human disaster or event is very much dependent on context – wider and internal. Far easier it would be for a town in the second century AD to find scope and elite support for re-investment as well as the materials and technicians to work repairs and revival; far less easy would it be for a like town in a western European context in the late fourth century when state and regional concerns looked to secure capitals and support army demands; and even less scope existed in the mid-fifth century here when economic and wider political breakdown were prevalent and when Church and defence soaked up any available funds (The sequence is of course largely delayed till the mid-seventh century for the eastern Mediterranean world, although some early urban victims do also appear here – Saradi 2006, 454–61 on Eastern urban decline, transformations and ruralisation into the Islamic period; *ibid.*, 461–3 on abilities to rebuild after quakes).

At Luni in Liguria in north-west Italy, also a city 'lost' and buried amid vineyards and wheatfields ([Figure 1.4](#)) but still displaying the denuded cores of baths, capitolium and amphitheatre, sizeable earthquake damage of the latter part of the fourth century is clearly registered in many parts of the town's late Roman archaeology. Although Luni's role and wealth were centred on the marble industry, these were greatly downsized in the third and fourth centuries and we might assume a city struggling to repair itself in the wake of a heavy quake. However, this was an episcopal centre and resources and manpower clearly did come together in the fifth century to build anew, to clear debris, and to reuse debris from the event – thus the paved main road was both cleared and then its surface relaid, but now using mixed materials of spoil, including architectural pieces, column drums, etc. drawn from collapsed adjoining public and private edifices, including the former Capitoline temple (Durante 2003, 204–6; on earlier excavations and reconstructions of Luni, see Frova 1973–74 and 1977. Important revisions on the post-Roman sequence is in

Ward-Perkins 1985–87). Some private structures were even rebuilt on a grander scale, such as the House of the Ocean Mosaic, which in time hosted a church and later the cathedral of Santa Maria (Durante 2003, 208–10). What was harder to counteract, however, was environmental change, and studies have suggested that from the mid- to late Empire, Luni's immediate shallow port and estuary became clogged with alluvium and choked with weeds; rising sea levels brought flooding and sand-blow, as well as salt water into wells; the coastline changed and receded; and the conditions may have increased malaria risks. Presumably, given that Luni formed an important Byzantine military fortress-town in the sixth to seventh centuries these changes were not so detrimental, or perhaps their effects were progressive; while the port's needs of a marble trade may have ended, access by smaller boats and the use of the main coast road no doubt enabled the prolongation of life in this old colony site (Delano Smith et al. 1986, 130–43).

Natural and human disasters can also bring disease and food shortages, with major floods spoiling stores and water sources, choking drains, and displacing and even drowning people. Paul the Deacon (*Historia Langobardorum*, III. 23–4) reported for AD 589 serious floods across the whole Po region with 'lands and farms inundated like swamps and there was great loss of both humans and animals', and in Rome, following the flood 'there came a most virulent plague called *inguinaria* that so devastated the population that out of a vast multitude very few survived'. In the Byzantine-Gothic Wars, Procopius (*Wars*, VI, 20.21) describes the loss of 50,000 people through famine in Picenum province in central east Italy, with warfare preventing first the normal processes of farming and harvesting in areas like Tuscany and Emilia Romagna, forcing people to migrate vainly in search of supplies, with the 'natural result that the majority of the people fell victim to all manner of diseases and it was only a few who threw these off and recovered'. The same period saw the equivalent of a Black Death hit the Mediterranean world – and impacting also much further afield – with the 'Justinianic Plague' of the 540s (discussed in Christie 2006, 500–504); while the scale of its human impact is disputed, chiefly in the absence of mass graves as proof, for Italy it came at a period when urban, rural and economic life was disrupted and fragile; even if it did not empty towns, it most probably weakened these, and encouraged flight by some to the countryside. Beyond Italy, it is worth observing how the debate regarding the demise of some of the 'dead cities' and 'dead villages' of northern Syria shies away from suggesting the 'Justinianic Plague' as a cause of irreversible depopulation, preferring instead to offer economic collapse and migration as more 'secure' explanations

(Kennedy 2007).



Figure 1.4 *Luni – view of the entrance way of the amphitheatre, with unexcavated urban and suburban remains in the fields and vineyards beyond (Photo: author)*

(iii) Economic Marginalisations and Loss

Luni also provides, as seen, an example of a town whose major economic role – marble exploitation and exportation to Rome initially, but then to many other Italian urban centres in the early to mid-Empire – fell away in the third century. In part the failures to keep the estuary clear and to counter alluvial build-up might denote economic slippage, with concomitant loss of local elite patronage tied into fading local fortunes. It was not Luni's sole *raison d'être*, however: after all, this colony was founded in 177 BC and was part of a systematic placing of key road centres on the main coast road (*via Aurelia*), offering links to inland, cross-Appenninic routes. While it is recognised that the coastal plain and immediate agricultural hinterland were quite shallow, nonetheless, wine was still produced and exported and sufficient local goods gave the city a fair self-sufficiency, supplemented as elsewhere by trade from land and sea. The site was thus able to retain a population after the large-scale marble extraction industry collapsed, and the noted presence of some fourth-century elite *domus* probably reveals that marble was in fact still utilised and extracted (for churches, sarcophagi, wall veneer).

Wine played a major role in the growth of landed estates and coastal port and town growth in western central coastal Italy, running from northern Tuscany (Etruria) down to southern Campania especially. From Campania, Falernian wine made a particularly strong and lasting impact from the late second century BC, and Mount Vesuvius featured numerous wine production and storage points and rich and working villas and farms; similarly for southern Tuscany, much studied are the large villas with both residential, servile and industrial quarters as at Settefinestre, featuring presses for oil and especially wine production and with the region well known for amphora production, with Cosa as a key port in the export trade (Campania: Arthur 1991, 71–7, 100–101; and Greene 1988, 94–6 on wine processing in and around Pompeii; Etruria: *ibid.*, 89–92, with 106–8 on the *ager Cosanus*). But Italy's boom phase for wine export had gone by c. AD 100, having faltered already in the late first century BC; although some specific wines gained 'prize' or 'luxury' status, the former intense competition and related wealth generation slipped away, and for northern Campania, Arthur's studies reveal the majority of amphora kiln sites abandoned, smaller farms quitted, and, as importantly, urban port fortunes waning. For Sinuessa recession hit early on: 'The town was not a producer, but a consumer, and once its role in the exportation of agricultural produce was denied, it had little reason to continue to exist, apart from its position as administrative centre and the requirements of the diehard urban-culture mentality of its citizens'. Building works of note slip away, including keeping the port silt-free (Arthur 1991, 101, noting the likely decay of Minturnae too, although here some fourth-century elite input is recognised, however, at the end of the sixth century Pope Gregory put its church in the charge of the bishop of Formia, 94–5).

(iv) Institutional Redundancy and State Decay

For lower Piedmont and some Apenninic regions, as seen, various Roman sites – even colonies and *municipia* – drift out of being, except where a Church presence conditions a more drawn out end. Otherwise, while a few examples appear to linger into the fourth century, many are fading already from the third and thus before the insecurities of warfare identified above. They may, however, link into the wider 'Third-century Crisis', with political, social and economic damages caused by rampant civil wars as well as the threat of barbarian incursions and raids affecting the northern and various of the western provinces. While the depth of this 'Crisis' is disputed, the impact on private patronage in the urban context is notable, with such euergetism fading substantially. Larger towns rode the economic storm and still generated enough taxes to help in the maintenance of

the urban fabric, from the fourth century chiefly in state administrators' hands. In this context, lesser towns lacking strong economic roles and active elite participation will have been at high risk. Pearce (2007) and La Rocca (1996), for example, have flagged the artificiality of many Roman urban and market foundations, these imposed where only a state tax or resource control need existed – 'corpi estranei alla logica reale del territorio' (Pearce 2007, 817; cf. Gelichi 2002, 171, arguing how some 'settlements seem to have been superfluous to the actual needs of the population and thus ceased to exist once they no longer fulfilled institutional roles as expressions of Roman government'. On the imposition of towns and their roles in the early Roman framework of provinces see papers in Corsi and Vermeulen 2010). This artificiality may be reflected archaeologically in a static early imperial urbanism, limited investment and growth, failures to attract population, and a premature drop in municipal work. It may also be an indication of reduced levels of Romanisation, of scattered pre-Roman population units of only rural nature, and of an inability to compete with other urban nuclei in the same territory. Third-century changes thus prompted a de-centring of weaker sites and a reversion to local or regional patterns of economic and demographic activity. Gelichi neatly summarises: 'In such circumstances, it is obvious that cities [towns] of this kind could not survive the process of 'natural selection' ... one might say that their ultimate demise was already inscribed in their original DNA' (ibid., 172–3).

Often the territory will have seen no dramatic demographic loss; rather, population foci reverted to the pre-Roman pattern, if with some likely drift of the former urban dwellers to other, more lasting settlements. In the south of Italy, meanwhile, some urban units gave way in the fourth and fifth centuries to far more 'agricultural agglomerations' or *vici*, sometimes emerging even on the old Roman urban site (as at *Metapontum*), otherwise elsewhere on the road network. Their roots and the mechanics of growth need resolving, but feasibly they responded to heightened demands for food, for grain, wine, meat, especially as Rome's wider economic pull was necessarily modified in the fourth century (Constantinople drawing away grain from Egypt) and the fifth (Vandal takeover of North Africa, damaged and diminishing western control). Sicily, other islands, but also much of the south of Italy accordingly saw production intensify to serve Rome (Arthur 2004, 104–9, noting also that most *vici* contain public structures like baths and especially 'stockpiling facilities, suggesting a tightly-controlled organisation of surplus'; the presence of bishops in many of these reflect their size and the need for other state supervision).

Beyond Italy it is worth noting how ‘institutional’ loss on a much wider scale could be applied to urbanism in Roman Britain following a formal withdrawal of State power in the early fifth century AD. As a result, any overall co-ordination of urban centres here slipped away, even if some of the replacement authorities continued to use towns as points of control, perhaps in association with the (fairly weak) Church, as posited for a seat like Wroxeter, and perhaps St Albans and Lincoln. However, as explored by other scholars, Romano-British urbanism was faltering in the fourth century, and many towns were at a low ebb after c. AD 350 when there is increasing evidence for industry (a mix of domestic and larger-scale, often metalworking, plus pottery production and butchery) starting to ‘invade’ decayed public spaces (an aspect recognised in other provinces such as North Africa by the sixth century and in part seen as reflecting the loss of suburbs and a rising ‘workaday’ image to towns, but also an inward move of rural activities and a possible control of production by Church authorities: Leone 2007, 217–37). London, particularly, shows a severe shrinkage of activity within the defended area, despite fourth-century repairs and extensions to the circuit. Hence at the important 1 Poultry site, near central to *Londinium*, the excavators state how it ‘follows the pattern seen on innumerable other sites in London, with a cessation of datable activity in the late 4th or early 5th century’ and with an almost total absence of middle Saxon finds within the walled area; here at 1 Poultry, renewed activity resumed in a consistent form only from the tenth century, with the archaeology recognising how ‘ruined Roman masonry structures survived in many parts of the city until their stonework was removed in the 10th and 11th centuries’ (Burch and Treveil 2011, 17–21). In London’s case activity shifted beyond the ruins to a more manageable and more open site near the present Covent Garden (the later site of *Lundenwic*). While better recognition of post-Roman material is enabling some identification of post-classical presences (as argued for Lincoln and Leicester – now two of the best excavated Roman urban sites in England – Speed 2010), in general, archaeologists talk of traces of ‘ongoing life in towns’ as opposed to town living, but in increasingly ‘ruralised’ if rubble-strewn spaces (e.g. Reece 1992; Faulkner 2000; an alternative, more positive interpretation comes in Rogers 2010) see [Figures 1.5](#) and [1.6](#). The picture is not wholly straightforward: while overall it is permissible to claim urban loss across much of fifth-century former Roman Britain – this sometimes enduring (as at Aldborough, Caistor and Silchester – see below) to make *vrbes extinctae* – in other cases the urban corpse was slowly being brought back into life with growing populations starting to reuse, rob or redevelop the Roman urban skeleton as a framework for new activity (e.g. at Chester, Leicester, London). Some

of this reuse of old Roman sites is military, connected with the emergence of *burhs* from the eighth and especially ninth centuries (with the plans of some new *burhs* like Wallingford potentially imitating the regularity of many a Roman town), but in others it may represent an extension of activity (primarily elite and religious) that may have kept a few otherwise ‘lost’ sites nominally active. As yet the archaeological data are scarce for these intervening ‘weak’ centuries; the careful interpretation of post-Roman materials and structures at Wroxeter help identify the possible types of missing archaeology (White 2000), although in Wroxeter’s case the difficulty lies in explaining why a site which does seem to show some urban resilience into the sixth century is then subsequently quitted, eventually in favour of Shrewsbury (if with a possible intermediate hill-fort successor – Baker 2010, 86–8).



Figure 1.5 View looking down onto the collapsed eastern gable wall of the presumed macellum at Roman Leicester (Ratae). A Saxon-period sunken-featured building (off-centre, left) cut into this collapse, perhaps in the sixth century. Dark earth deposits underlay the collapse and contained early Anglo-Saxon handmade pottery. (Photo courtesy of ULAS/ University of Leicester Archaeological Services)



Figure 1.6

Revised Archaeologies of ‘Ends’

Next we can address a number of archaeological projects in Italy which have modified in substantial fashion previous bald and simplistic images of urban loss, thanks to an ability to recognise better the presence of, for example, timber or rough stone houses, related occupation layers and rubbish pits, and to date better non-imported ceramics. But often new archaeologies struggle with data loss from much earlier explorations, which may in some cases have shorn away – as for Ostia noted above – many of the (to us) crucial post-classical and medieval deposits. Thus, Pedley (1990, 163) observes how ‘Evidence for Paestum in late Roman and medieval times is regrettably patchy: a somewhat reckless excavation policy, which focused naturally enough on the Greek city, did not in the accustomed methods of the time pay much attention to the late classical remains’.

Yet despite this problem, something of the fate of Paestum has been reconstructed, showing the old colony site being sidelined in terms of trade flow and suffering from water flow problems: anchorages became blocked due to minimal dredging, alluvial and calcic deposits choked streams, and marshland and malaria spread. These data combine to suggest a less salubrious and less populous centre by the fifth century, with the community shifting to the higher ground around the old temple of Athena, this potentially already converted into a church. Burials here and around a later church of the Annunziata imply a relatively stable if compact population across the fifth to seventh centuries – served, it seems, by a resident bishop at least in the late sixth to mid-seventh centuries. A replacement centre is seen to arise in hills 5 km away at Capaccio from the eighth century, growing into a well-fortified township before falling victim to warfare in the mid-thirteenth century, with only the cathedral church of Santa Maria del Granato persisting (*ibid.*, 164–7) – thus forming a second ‘extinction’ to an urban nucleus in the zone. Here in Italy, as elsewhere, the mid-eighteenth-century desire for antiquities, enlightenment and discovery started the first page of historical,

architectural and archaeological ‘rediscovery’ of Paestum’s ancient urban pasts (see Bignamini and Hornsby 2010 for discussion of such enlightened hunting for antiquities and their related damage to many notable archaeological sites of all types in Rome and its environs especially, e.g. outputs from periodic ‘licensed excavations’ by Gavin Hamilton and then Robert Fagan at and around Ostia from the 1770s to 1790s).

Three central Italian examples offer other scenarios of decay and transition. First is the study at *Falerii Novi* in south Etruria, forming part of the much wider archaeological survey of the Tiber Valley. Here comprehensive geophysical (magnetometer) surveys were undertaken within the open area still defined by late Republican town walls (covering a total of 90 per cent of the 30.6 hectares of intramural space) and despite complexities to some of the buried data, an impressive image has been created of the organisation of the interior with its c. 73 *insulae*, identifying a variety of major public structures and spaces, notably the forum (Figure 1.7). Analysis of surface materials was also made in specific sites to gain a broad cross-section of material chronologies and strengths: this helped to identify how the forum zone probably persisted as an active space into the fifth and sixth century, whereas such late data were rare for the theatre and south-eastern zones (Keay et al. 2000, NB 70–5). What is perhaps most striking is the fact that so few above-ground structural data survive at *Falerii Novi*: some robbing occurred certainly for construction of the eleventh-century Benedictine abbey of Santa Maria di Falleri near the west gate, but this is insufficient to explain the now ruralised intramural space. Potentially material was taken away by other emergent communities such as Civita Castellana and the abbey no doubt cashed in by selling on materials (if perhaps not allowing robbing of the defensive circuit which acted as a very ample abbey precinct wall).



Figure 1.7

The Tiber Valley Project also included excavations at other ‘lost’ Roman locations, most notably *Forum Novum* at Vescovio, this in the

Sabine hills. Unlike *Falerii Novi* where the subsurface survey work provided a full plan but one lacking clear chronological guides regarding internal evolution, at *Forum Novum*, survey and excavations have been combined. These indicate that the amphitheatre (identified by georadar mainly under a car park), baths and funerary zone were out of use by the third century AD, with apparent shrinkage of settlement to a restricted zone centred on the forum; here is imposed the Romanesque church of S. Maria, although excavations near the apse have revealed activity extending from the first to sixteenth centuries, including early medieval structuring and pits. As a documented episcopal seat, it is envisaged that the church became the focus to a far more scattered community, with *Forum Novum* a gathering point but one no longer classifiable as a 'town', even if elements of the Roman town clearly remained evident in the plots and fields around (Gaffney et al. 2004).

A third site is Ferento in Lazio, first explored on a large scale early in the twentieth century, but only systematically and scientifically investigated since 1994 (Maetzke et al. 2001). The earlier clearance operations had centred on the Roman remains and so revealed the theatre, forum zone, baths and part of the *decumanus*, but the recent and ongoing studies have been designed to sample the town's whole lifespan, including its post-Roman phases when the site still served as a bishopric and lay on the frontier between the Rome Duchy and Lombard *Tuscia*; its Lombard conquest in AD 605 may have seen the bishop transfer to the Byzantine *castrum* of Bomarzo. Open area excavations identified a notable material reduction to the site between the seventh/eighth and tenth centuries, in which period burials are attested in and around buildings as well as in the theatre *cavea* (ibid., 302–4). A section of discovered circuit wall, imposed over demolished or destroyed earlier buildings defining a diminished western area near the theatre, may relate to the Byzantine garrisoning of the town in the sixth century. Such citadels cutting through the old town plans are known in sixth-century Byzantine North Africa and denote how military needs and population shrinkage prompted urban redesign and entrenchment, plus robbing of defunct classical structures (Pringle 1981; Leone 2007, 191–7). From the ninth century Ferento saw some expansion, marked by fairly rough buildings set against the Byzantine defences, and in c. AD 1100 a new eastern circuit wall was created, doubling the former enclosed area. A final demise only came when the site was destroyed by the rival city of Viterbo in the 1170s (Pensabene 1993–94; Maetzke et al. 2001, 296–7, 320–21). At Ferento, therefore, modern excavations have corrected the image of a 'lost' town and identified a more varied fate, with military strategy playing a key role in the site's early medieval and medieval afterlives.

New Methods and Approaches

The central Italian examples just noted highlight new archaeological initiatives, which assess and then sample ‘lost’ urban sites on a much more systematic level than previously undertaken. If not new (witness in particular Andrew Poulter’s *Nicopolis ad Istrum* project from 1985 – see Poulter 1995, 2007b), the mapping of a growing number of these ancient cities through topographic, geophysical and aerial survey, allied with surface survey – i.e. collection or recording of artefact numbers, types, concentrations, dates, etc. – has gained much momentum in the last decade, particularly through the fuller usage of GPS plotting, more complex and sensitive methods of geophysical coverage (including ground-penetrating radar), and more developed GIS mapping and analysis programmes. Such integrated or ‘multi-method and non-invasive’ techniques and approaches have meant the emergence of an ‘Urban landscape archaeology’ which is currently paying great dividends across much of the old Roman world – as particularly evident in the publication deriving from workshops held in Rome in 2007 and 2009. (See the numerous valuable papers in Vermeulen et al. 2012; cf. Giorgi and Lepore 2010 for Suasa and Gaffney et al. in this volume. See, for an extended urban-based project and publication series, the North African port-town of *Leptiminus* in east central Tunisia, where interdisciplinary work using varied techniques of surface, non-intrusive and sub-surface surveys and investigations – being in fact the first project in North Africa to apply fieldwalking techniques in an urban context – has been vital to raise awareness of the antiquity and archaeological value of the site, now threatened by modern housing encroachment, robbing, dumping and agricultural exploitation. Here the fifth to seventh centuries see progressive shrinkage of the urban core and suburbium, loss of public space, intrusions of industrial activities, and nucleation around Christian shrines; by the Islamic eighth century both port and old town seem largely abandoned and a new village site emerges at Lamta to the east. Stone et al. 2011, NB [Chapters 1](#) and [7](#).)

To take one Italian example of recent urban landscape archaeology, Cologne and Mainz Universities, alongside the Abruzzo Soprintendenza, have combined in fieldwork during 2006–2010 at the Roman town site of *Amiternum* sited close to L’Aquila in the Abruzzo Apennine region, and located c. 650 m above sea level (Heinzelmann et al. 2010; Heinzelmann and Jordan 2012). Transhumance, woodland exploitation, terraced and valley cultivation fed the Roman town (which had in fact been relocated from an upland site to the valley and onto the *via Caecilia* in the late Republic), which grew by the second century AD to feature forum, theatre, amphitheatre (this still

fairly well preserved above ground), baths, aqueduct and burial zones. Epigraphic data show restoration work by its *ordo splendissimus* into the fourth century, but an earthquake of 346/7 may have severely affected the site (to be proven through the archaeology), although it was a bishopric into the sixth century. By then, however, it is claimed that the bishop and a reduced, residual urban flock had shifted to an older, more elevated site. The field project combines an array of elements and approaches: a GIS contains satellite images, aerial photos, maps, records of old finds and all inscriptions, GPS plots of landscape and artificial features, photographic mapping of all visible features, surface walking and intensive survey data, geomorphological analyses, geophysical surveys (electrical resistance, GPR, magnetometry, and magnetic susceptibility), plus excavation information. Intriguingly, surface survey data, when combined with the geophysical plots, revealed that some surface materials like marble and building debris corresponded to no detected buried features and seem to signify imported and relocated soils to aid cultivation. The surveys meanwhile pointed to fairly intense robbing of structures of their building materials, while the geoarchaeology identified alluvial and colluvial coverage masking certain areas of the site. Nonetheless, combined, the analyses have helped reveal the site's overall extent and pinpointed test areas for excavation of streets, private and public structures, including sections of a basilica, temple and *domus*. In total, *Amiternum* appears a compact townscape, centred on the Roman road, yet offering 'a strangely contradictory picture of a strong urban infrastructure, with a disproportionately large number of public buildings, and a correspondingly small number of residential buildings' (ibid., 31). Some *domus* were well-to-do, but were these of local administrators or members of the state priesthood? Did many locals still prefer to live on estates in the surrounding landscape? The project team identifies how some of the local elite rose high to become equestrians and even senators, with many holding extensive lands in the zone and with stakes in the busy transhumance traffic and market. How and why did the fortunes of *Amiternum* unravel? Did Christianisation play a role, affecting the known Hercules cult and the apparent imperial cult shrine? Did elite interest transfer away in the demanding fourth century or in the face of the insecurity of the early fifth and so weaken the ability to maintain both town and its hold on the lands and village communities around? Was there some environmental issue – over-pasturing by flocks or hillside degradation? Was the church imposed after decay had set in or should we seek the first episcopal seat on the medieval successor hillside of S. Vittorino? In sum, therefore, while the archaeological and related mapping has achieved much and promises more, it is clear that the

complex mapping routes identified will still only hint at the possible complexity of the hidden archaeology that will require excavation to pinpoint the details of *Amiternum*'s internal structural chronology and demographic evolution, and that intrusive archaeology will itself need to be fairly large-scale to gather all required data. Importantly, however, here as in many other cases, the groundwork is prepared, the questions raised and the next phases and methods are being planned.

As noted, such projects are underway in numerous Mediterranean countries, but have applicability and application also even in fringe provinces, hence in Britain recent large-scale projects of mapping and analysis and detailed archaeological excavation of extinct Roman urban sites include Silchester (see Fulford, this volume) and Caistor St Edmund (Caistor-by-Norwich), Roman *Venta Icenorum* (Bowden and Bescoby 2008; <http://caistorromanproject.com/index.htm>), with much revisiting in these of Victorian or pre-World War II excavations (most unpublished) and with each having an explicit target of understanding better the final stages of Roman urban life (Figure 1.8). The potential of such multi-faceted approaches is thus flagged for sites like Aldborough (*Isurium Brigantium*) in Yorkshire which remains under-valued and under-exploited as an abandoned classical site. Now comprising a village – but one still occupying the central core of the old town – surrounded by vegetable plots, gardens, arable fields and woodland, fieldwork here has been very limited, despite discoveries in the Victorian period of fine Roman townhouse mosaics and with fairly well preserved sections of the defensive curtain wall. The geology affects the ancient site's visibility from the air, requiring very dry conditions to help discern crop- and parch-marks, although periodic coverage in the right conditions has proved useful; only now is this being used alongside geophysical prospection to tease out more of the town plan and its extension (Sutcliffe 2010). But, of course, as observed above, little of this mapping, unless supported by excavation, will properly identify the causes and character of Aldborough's demise and determine any post-Roman afterlives here.

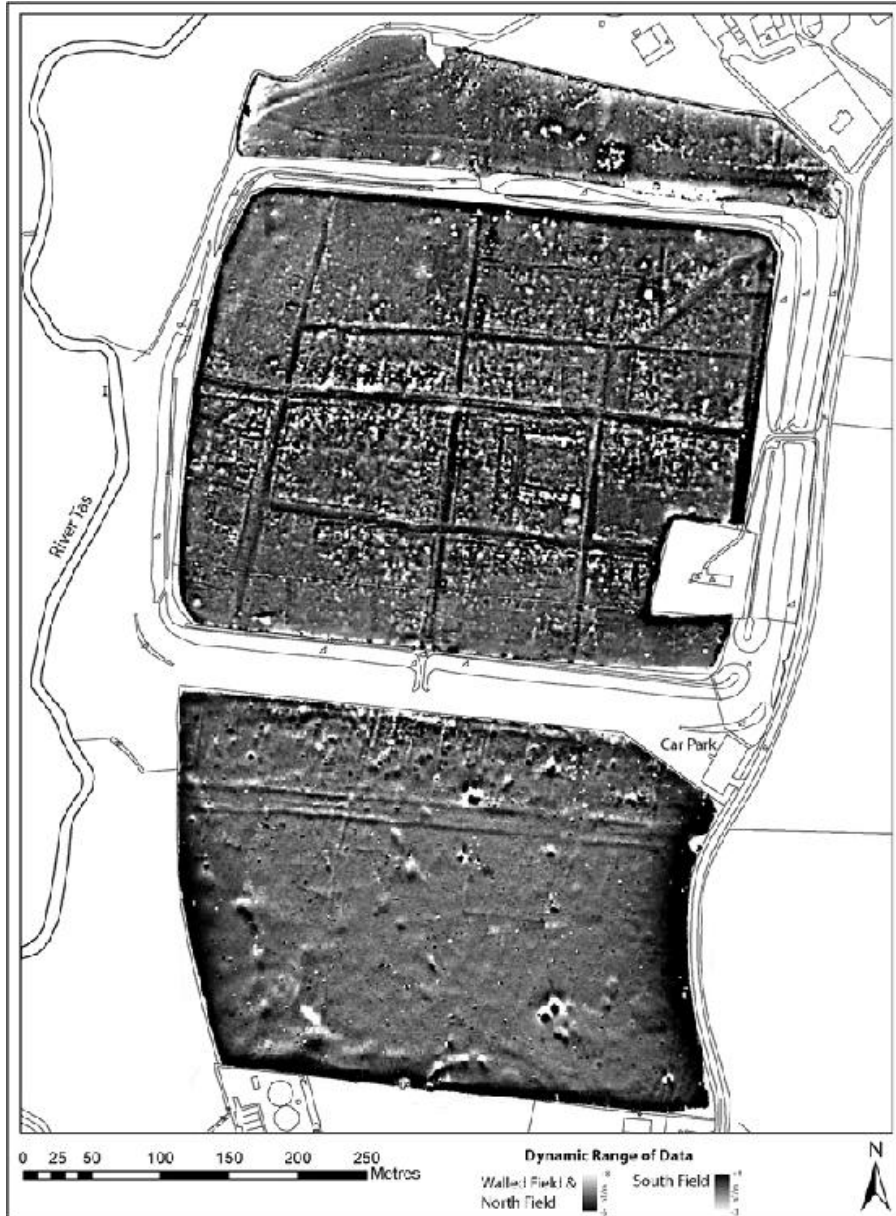


Figure 1.8 Combined geophysical survey plot of intramural space of Caistor St Edmund and southern fields. The walled area appears to show an emphasis of activity gathered on the main roads and the unusually angled road in the north-east corner; many other sectors seem fairly empty – the south end and north-west corner especially (Image courtesy of Will Bowden)

Revised Readings of Lives and Ends

This final section draws attention to the results of recent, more systematic and focused research and re-interpretation of old data at a pair of non-Italian abandoned classical sites, to show the academic and archaeological benefits that have accrued and which contribute to a fuller and better understanding of urban forms, contents, evolutions and fates. Two eastern examples are offered (for others, see contributions in Parrish 2001), each with extensive and impressive structural survivals of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine date and each with long-term excavation programmes (after earlier spells of antiquarian hunting).

Gortina/Gortyn:

Once the provincial capital to Crete and Cyrenaica, this abandoned city site of 80 hectares has roots in the seventh century BC and saw a final urban decay in the seventh or eighth century AD. With partially standing structures set on a plain and on terraced slopes below an acropolis, and with many areas set within modern olive groves, the site has seen excavation and monument exposure and conservation since the late nineteenth century, but more specifically has been the focus of an ongoing Italian Archaeological Mission. This Mission's work is providing ever more developed and detailed visions of the site across time and there has been particular recent emphasis on the sixth- to seventh-century 'Byzantine district' and the wider religious landscape, showing a progressive reduction in quality and scale from the early seventh century. The strong structural survivals overall have enabled some significant focused studies (many pursued as doctoral topics) which give an enhanced reading of both urban design and infrastructural organisation, as well as population changes. One such study has centred on systems of Roman to Byzantine water supply (Giorgi 2007): this commenced from a natural source 15 km away, taken by a piped aqueduct, and its route then featured bridges, water-towers, underground urban pipes for public and private baths, fountains, cisterns and later 'cistern-fountains', plus tubs and troughs. The last phases of repair and use are well enough preserved and help to identify how the aqueduct and its branches came to form the virtual spine to late Gortina – a seventh-century cityscape that was part ruinous, with disused districts and with an increasingly functional and industrial character in the active zones.

A second major research strand explored to great effect at Gortina, thanks to architectural survivals and a high recovery rate of sculptural remains, relates to the process and imposition of Christianisation (Baldini Lippolis 2009; Baldini Lippolis and Vallarino 2012). Much

Roman sculpture has in fact been recovered *in situ*, with other fragments, some sizeable, reused in walls, chiefly in sixth- and seventh-century contexts. The evidence points to pagan religious sites closed, demolished or built over (not always by churches) in the course of the fifth century, and with their statuary removed or toppled, their heads often detached, some fragmented, and others with crosses inscribed on foreheads or chests. Exploration of the various churches, meanwhile, shows the ways the local Church and bishops exploited older spaces and materials in the city, and dictated new urban and suburban foci. Epigraphic survivals then provide invaluable guides to acts of euergetism by the Church for the community through to the seventh century, including restorations after earthquakes. Church plans, materials and decorations – in some cases very well preserved under collapse layers, as at the substantial Mitropolis church and baptistery – meanwhile enable hugely detailed assessments to be made on individual structural histories, their artistic displays and connections, internal furnishings, etc. (Farioli Campanati 2009).

Ephesus:

The history of study at this major Hellenistic to Byzantine city in western Turkey (the provincial capital of Roman Asia Minor, potentially with up to a quarter of a million inhabitants) is long, with busy interest by English antiquarians in the second half of the nineteenth century and by Austrian archaeologists (in particular since 1985) across almost the whole twentieth century. (Challis 2008, [Chapter 6](#), notes especially British Museum-funded digs from 1863–74 with an emphasis on pagan temples and Christian basilicas, and related artwork and inscriptions. Challis offers much detail of the politics, characters, targets, threats, rewards and logistics of the work – including the shipping of much material to London. Donkow 2009, 22 also notes the use of dynamite at the Temple of Artemis to help clear late accretions!). The wealth of the archaeology at the site is vast, although archaeologists have also had to contend with much reuse and spoliation from the seventh century on into the medieval, Turkish period with Byzantine retrenchment on the Upper City citadel, which later hosted a Turkish town (Foss 1979, Parts II and III cover Ephesus' fascinating post-classical history). Groh (2012) argues that excavation strategy continued to be monument-centred all the way through to the start of this century, until a new initiative by the Austrian Archaeological Institute in Vienna from 2000–06 shifted emphasis to the Upper City and to intra-urban survey; fairly quickly, however, the results stimulated an extension of the survey to the Lower City and parts of the burial zone. As well as mapping the street

grid, enabling new readings of the Hellenistic, Roman and early Byzantine grids and settlement depths, specific insights gained included better understanding of the areas and densities of domestic and secular occupation and of more elite and public spaces, and clarification of the Upper City's water supply and methods of drainage, here cleverly meshing in with the terraced buildings (this analysis helped answer problems raised in Foss 1979, 183–4, Appendix 2).



Figure 1.9 View across an excavated segment of the ‘Byzantine quarter’ near the Pythion shrine (located to right in background) at Gortina, central Crete. The main exposed structure relates to shops and housing of the sixth/seventh century (Photo courtesy of Enrico Zanini)

Site accessibility and visibility have, indeed, been key in exploring the changing character of Ephesus from the later Empire into the Justinianic period. Close reading of the more recent archaeology has prompted Ladstätter and Pülz (2007) to argue for higher levels of damage from earthquakes in the 260s and then mid-fourth century especially than previously considered, claiming much slower rates and acts of renewal; they see such ruins as conveniently ‘feeding’ new works and urban redesign from the early fifth century – such as the conversion of the Library of Celsus, whose interior was filled with rubble, and its facade then made part of a major new fountain.

Renewal was especially displayed on the wide, long processional streets, via monumental memorials, arches, statues and inscriptions (ibid., 402–4). Interesting, however, is the mode of Christianisation at Ephesus, where, despite a rich pagan heritage, we see none of the more aggressive impositions and removals noted for Gortina: churches were in a few instances imposed over temples, but without previous ‘wanton destruction’. Instead, other old public buildings, notably gymnasia, probably still derelict and damaged after the fourth-century (or third-century) quakes, witnessed robbing and conversion (ibid., 410–17). Charting these new religious foci in detail will offer much for reconstructing late antique Ephesus, although the authors stress that ‘this impression of a city full of churches is probably because it is precisely these areas which have been cleared and excavated’. The problem of such clearance means that pinpointing their specific roles and ends will be arduous; at the same time the noted monument emphasis means that we still only weakly understand the people populating the city over time and how their settlement tied into the emerging Christian cityscape. But, as Groh (2012: 65–70) highlights, the new urban landscape work has provided secure foundations for assessing secular and domestic spaces; the potential is high for creating a better human image of late Roman, Byzantine and post-classical Ephesus.

Conclusion

Although we possess a good scattering of urban losses and open sites across the Roman provinces, and despite the fact that many of these, especially in the eastern Mediterranean, have seen long-term archaeological explorations, it might be claimed that emphasis still remains centred on tracing the sites in their prime or on questioning their roots and internal evolutions, rather than seeking to address properly the sequences of decline and eventual loss. This may be an injustice, since, as seen, some projects, such as those at Amorion, Sagalassos, Ephesus, Gortyn, and Portus, and projects like Classe and others discussed in this volume, do indeed seek to question the final phases and to explore the often vague or inconspicuous afterlives of these sites – whether village, church or monastery, scattered hamlets, or economic (agricultural, quarrying, etc.) (For Amorion/Amorium, see Lightfoot and Lightfoot 2007; for Sagalassos, see Martens et al. 2011; Martens 2007). But in most of these cases, the archaeologists struggle against the fact that up to a millennium, or even a millennium and a half, of erosion, exposure to the elements and humans, robbing of materials, land change, and then early clearances for excavations of the classical levels, means that the evidence for

comprehending these ‘afterlives’ can be as ephemeral or as insecure as the latest actual phases of lives of these former urban centres (cf. Discussion by Donkow 2009, 23–5 on Ephesus, such as the cleaning away of the late antique reworking of the Library of Celsus (uncovered in 1905/06) and its rebuilding and restoration in the 1970s to create a key tourist spot). The ‘urban landscape archaeology’ noted above (Vermeulen et al. 2012) is clearly providing ample scope, however, to start to frame spatial evolutions at a variety of sites and to begin the process of pinpointing targets or formulating strategies to tackle questions of urban change at key moments. Associated detailed and large-scale excavations clearly remain core to exploring these, but with all their cost implications this cannot be an immediate and widespread approach. (Note also of course that the array of landscape approaches are themselves not cheap in time, labour, analysis and data storage!)

Our key question is thus: were these really *vrbes extinctae*? Perhaps if not deemed extinct, then most no longer should be classed as ‘cities’ after the classical period. A few may well have retained bishops but these too sometimes were only just clinging on and were either due to be transferred or were already living elsewhere. But for the post-Roman period, especially in the West, the goalposts defining a ‘city’ were set much more widely, with episcopal presences sufficient to raise or maintain a status – this occasionally in memory of a former value and scale (as at Aquileia). What is largely lost to us is how the successor populations at these sites viewed their surroundings, and how they perceived the ruins of the past in which they lived. How readily were ruins robbed, materials broken up, objects hunted out, spaces cleared, and rubbish dumped? Were living and church spaces divorced from such decayed space? In reality, the successor communities did not match the scale or standards of their classical predecessors, and were far more ‘workaday’ settlements which duly made use of what was around and unused; thus robbing, lime-burning, spoliation, insertion of burials, penning of animals and the like, must have been commonplace. The past was there to be used according to the needs of that present. In a different but perhaps comparable vein, we can observe how modern archaeological parks centred on abandoned towns are also exploiting these past ruins, choosing where people go, what is to be dug up, what is to be salvaged and maintained, and what objects are to be stored and displayed. But, as in the past, not all can be tended and restored – the deterioration of sectors of the exposed ancient Pompeii is a case in point – and big questions arise about what periods should be preserved, since we all now recognise that late antique and early medieval features have as much right to be conserved and presented. Thus, alongside studying

and excavating these sites, so much more needs to be done to ensure their preservation for future generations of visitors and scholars. And while the urban landscape archaeology projects noted above and covered in this volume are going to generate much crucial data, they may perhaps also generate many more ongoing issues of heritage conservation.

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Chapter 2

Classe: Archaeologies of a Lost City

Andrea Augenti

Introduction: The Origins and Evolution of Archaeological Research at Classe

The story and idea that under the ploughed fields south of Ravenna in northeast Italy there lie buried the remains of an ancient, lost city have long been a focus of interest, debate and fascination for both locals and scholars. While some recognition already existed in the Middle Ages, as indicated by a document of 1223 which provides a topographic reference: '*via que est juxta murellos de civitate Classis*' ('The roadway which lies next to the walls of the city of Classis' – see Fantuzzi 1802, 194, but with the 'murelli' unlikely to be the old city walls), the voicing of interest is first explicitly made in the mid-sixteenth-century work *Descrittione di tutta Italia* by the Bolognese geographer Leandro Alberti, who wrote (1550, 272–3):

It is certainly something amazing to think how it is possible that in this place where once was that city [Classe] and the port with its lighthouse ... nowadays one can see almost no trace of buildings. Indeed, all this space now appears arid ... But one can easily be aware of it through the debris that can be seen here and there, and most of all through [the standing church of] S. Apollinare which lies three miles from Ravenna ... and also from the vestiges of large buildings and particularly those half ruined churches, and scatterings of stone and brick worked by man to create what had once been here fine and grandiose structures, and what had been noble and esteemed churches ...' [My translation]

Not much later, confirmation of this came from the local historian Girolamo Rossi (1589, 14–15), in his *Storie Ravennati*:

Of the city of Classe, once a splendid and bountiful site, there survive minimal traces; the towers and all were knocked down and demolished, the port no longer exists and even the marsh has been turned into worked land. [My translation]

Both sources (discussed by Ricci 1989, 552–3; Giovannini and Ricci 1985, 60–63) thus offer an image of Classe, once the fleet base of the late Roman Western imperial capital of Ravenna, and a city in its own right, as lost. The two scholars drew, of course, from two main sources of information: written ancient and near contemporary texts (in

particular the *Liber Pontificalis* by the Ravennate cleric and historian Agnellus, compiled in the ninth century), which attest and confirm the importance and scale of the port-city, and the material traces, which both document and substantiate the basis of the former sources.

It has been a long process, however, from such antiquarian recognition to the birth of registering the need for detailed and consistent archaeological investigations to put flesh on the few visible bones of this lost habitat. Indeed, after some sporadic, episodic casual finds (mostly sarcophagi and traces of unidentified ancient buildings; see Novara 1998, 31–72) across the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries – a period which we might label as that of ‘prehistoric’ study for Classe – it was only in the nineteenth century that research became in any way intensive and geared to actually exploring the buried traces of former Classe (see Novara 1998, 72–232, and excavation data in Augenti 2011).

This second phase of study, running roughly from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, while not to be classified as in any way systematic, raised the stakes in terms of the value of the site. Its principal (and, in many ways, very typical for the time) characteristics can be summarised as being: (i) a coming together, on the ground, at different times, of ‘professional’ archaeologists and enthusiasts; (ii) the gathering up of chance or casual finds of antiquarian worth (metal finds, statuary, coins), or finds of archaeological value (e.g. columns, capitals, inscriptions) or interest (bricks); and (iii) a strong attention to monumental units, especially ecclesiastical buildings, around which much excavation activity and digging came to be concentrated.

Following this second phase of our periodisation of archaeological exploration at Classe, comes a third, beginning in the 1960s, and marking a much closer respect of the past. Activity and attention increase, not just on the ground, but also from the air (with the notable involvement of Giulio Schmiedt in the efforts of aerial mapping – 1962; 1968; 1978, 221–6), as well as through the epigraphic survivals. A series of conferences and publications in the 1960s reflect this new intensity (Atti 1962; 1968). In terms of excavation work, while perhaps not to be defined as systematic, much effort was put into clarifying aspects of the topography of Classe and its hinterland: most significant in this regard were the investigations at and around the basilica of San Severo (from 1964) and subsequently at the port area (from 1974); both were fundamental in highlighting the levels of archaeological survival and the vast potential to be found over the whole site. These prompted also the first in a series of valuable mapping programmes (e.g. Cortesi 1967). It is key to stress that these studies were the result of collaboration

between many institutions alongside the Comune di Ravenna, notably the Soprintendenza Archeologica dell'Emilia-Romagna, Bologna University (especially in the figures of Giuseppe Bovini and later Raffaella Farioli), and a strong contingent of local enthusiasts and volunteers, core to whom were Giuseppe Cortesi and Arnaldo Roncuzzi. These latter actually guided some of the investigations and mapping in this period, thanks notably to their manual coring work, aiming to plot depths of deposits and to provide tentative reconstructions of the site topography (ibid. 1980).

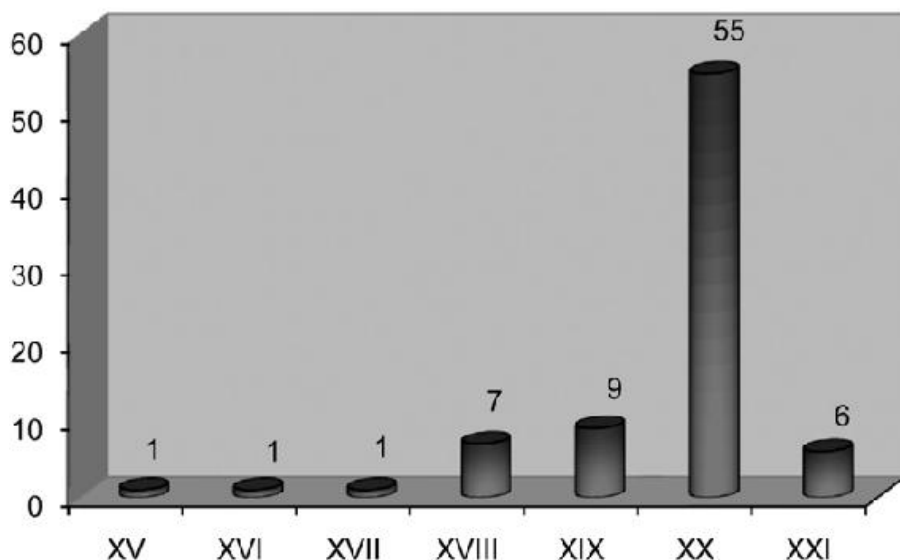


Figure 2.1 *Excavations at Classe: interventions across the centuries*

This third archaeological phase at Classe slowed down towards the start of the 1980s, and understandably concentrated for a spell on small interventions linked to restoration works on structures already uncovered; publications too became rather more sporadic (the chief ones being Bermond Montanari 1983; Maioli and Stoppioni 1987) – partly due to an inability to sustain the scale of operations of the 1960s, given a reduction of resources, but also more strongly due to the loss of one of the main drivers of the period, namely Giuseppe Bovini.

The final and most recent block of research at Classe comprises a systematic programme of exploration, restoration and contextualisation. Initiated in 2001 with a new excavation campaign at the port site, it marks primarily a collaboration between the Dipartimento di Archeologia of the Università di Bologna (sede di Ravenna) and the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici dell'Emilia-Romagna, but with a new partner body created in 2003: the

Fondazione RavennAntica. From the outset the target has been to create a vast open-air museum, exploiting the excavated sites and materials and to preserve the unexcavated spaces. A current focus of the Parco Archeologico di Classe are the port excavations, reached from the Museo Archeologico di Classe, established in the former Eridania sugar factory, and housing and displaying finds from the recent and older work (Vittorini 2007). Core to the excavations are questions related to organisation, settlement sequence, economic scales and forms, and processes of decay – all questions to be tackled through close stratigraphic and finds analysis. What stood out from the earliest work in 2001–03 was the quantitative complexity of the site, with tens of thousands of potsherds gathered from fairly compact trenches (see Augenti et al. 2003: 272–5). Even more substantial were the results of a full 12 months of excavation across 2004–05, when up to 4,000 m² of the port area were investigated (see [Figure 2.2](#)), making it one of the largest research projects both regionally as well as nationally (Augenti et al. 2007a).

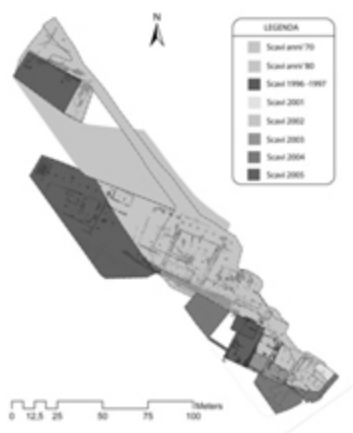


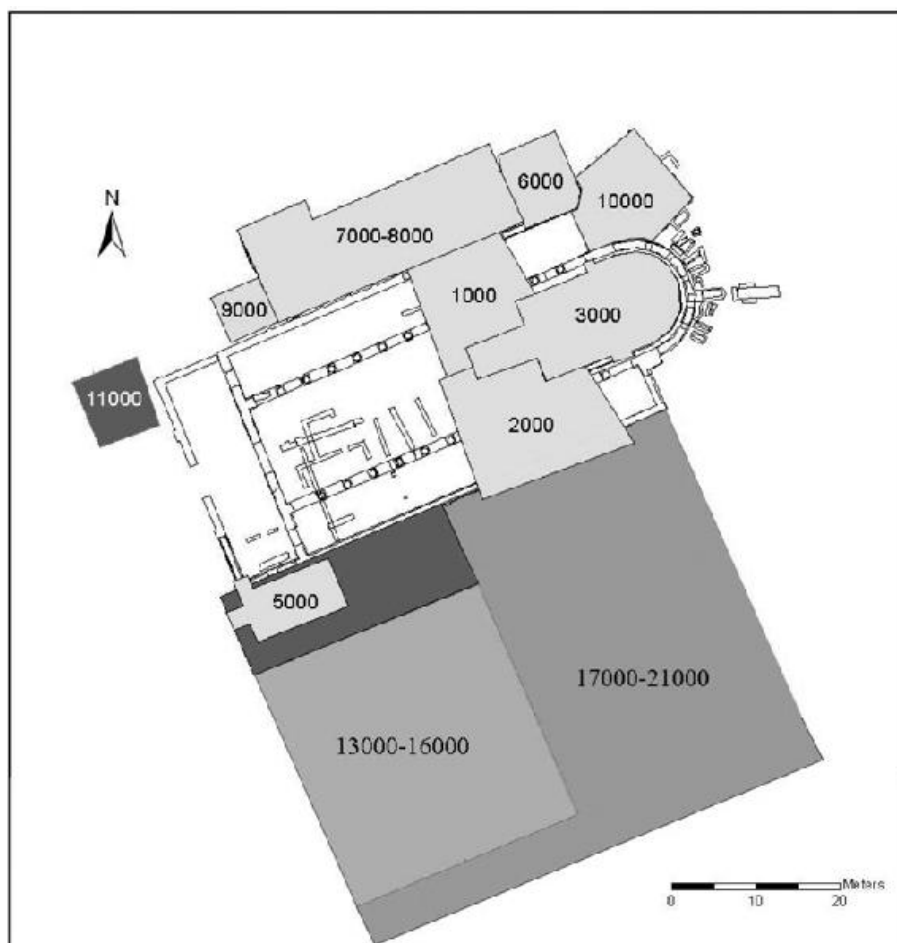
Figure 2.2

These investigations have provided secure chronologies for the port's initial main phase (from the start of the fifth century AD) to its sixth-century peak and through subsequent phases until its progressive abandonment during the ninth century. Most notable are the data gathered on the volume and range of trade passing through Classe and Ravenna in Late Antiquity (fifth to seventh centuries), when the Ravenna-Caesarea-Classe conurbation lay central to an intensive network of international traffic, both maritime and land.

Not all work was on the port: other trenches (some still active) were sited to tackle wider questions of Classe's topography: thus, as well as excavation of a section of the town walls, work at the necropolis at podere Minghetti recovered the oldest traces yet for the zone (late first

century BC) (Fasold et al. 2004; Lepore and Montevecchi 2009).

Next, following the extended work at the port quarter, attention shifted to the major urban basilica church of San Severo, built at the end of the sixth century, close to which was later implanted a tenth-century Benedictine monastery. San Severo is one of the last surviving monuments of late antique Classe, only being definitively demolished during the nineteenth century; effectively it is also one of the most promising sites in terms of the potential for tracing early medieval and medieval Classe or at least seeing what survived after Classe failed. Five major campaigns of excavation (again combined projects with the Fondazione RavennAntica, Bologna University and the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici) have occurred during 2006–2010, the first of these undertaken by relevant staff and teams from the Archaeology departments of the universities of Bologna, Barcelona, Budapest and Leicester, in the ambit of a European project in the ‘Culture 2000’ programme (see Augenti 2006b).



Funding from this enabled not just participation on the excavation, but also, across the year, promoted a set of highly successful and rewarding workshops and conferences, plus the transfer and sharing of technical expertise. This enterprise also reflected the aim for much wider, international recognition of the archaeological value of Classe, manifested in an array of exhibitions, catalogues, conferences and seminars, locally, nationally and internationally (Augenti and Bertelli 2006; 2007; key conferences and related publications include: *Le città italiane tra la tarda Antichità e l'alto Medioevo*, Ravenna, 26–28 Feb., 2004; *Ravenna da capitale imperiale a capitale esarcale*, XVII Congresso Internazionale di Studio sull'Alto Medioevo, Ravenna, 6–12 June 2004; *La circolazione delle ceramiche nell'Adriatico tra tarda antichità e alto medioevo*, Venice, 24–25 June 2004; *Port Networks in the Roman Mediterranean*, Rome, 6–8 March 2008).

Setting all the old and new data into a coherent and accessible whole is crucial for this programme of study. Thus, a recent output is the *Carta del Potenziale Archeologico di Classe* (Augenti 2011) which helps evaluate the buried deposits at Classe and signals the various potentials of these, thus aiding in future archaeological research.

Evaluating Classe from the Recent Archaeology

Classe before Classe

From the evidence gathered at Podere Minghetti, it seems possible to argue that from the very late Republican period onward, the zone of Classe saw much use for burials, with an emphasis around the main road (later called 'Reina' but first laid out in the first century AD) running north to Ravenna (e.g. burials at Podere Giorgioni and at San Severo) and on the bands of dunes flanking the former coast – this now shifted much further eastwards (e.g. burials at Cà della Vigna, Podere Marabina, Cà Lunga, Vasche dello Zuccherificio – see Lasi 2002; Fasold et al. 2004). Some necropoleis appear short-lived, but others run much later; some also have tombstones related to *classarii*, i.e. members of the imperial fleet, mostly datable to the first to third centuries AD – Ravenna was in fact the fleet base (fleet = *classis*) for patrolling the Adriatic. But, apart from such epigraphic testimony, no trace has yet been found of possible barracks for the fleet (Bollini 1990, 309; Mansuelli 1967; Giacomini 1990; plus an entry by Maioli in Augenti and Bertelli 2007, 94).

Other evidence shows various middle to higher ranking (suburban) villas over the zone. One example is the building with a first phase floor in *opus spicatum* and subsequently in mosaic, found near the

present via Falconara, and dated to between the fourth and sixth centuries; another villa was traced under the basilica of San Severo; another was covered by the late antique port structures; and a recent example was identified near a tower of the city walls, clearly destroyed to make way for the defences here (villa in via Falconara: Manzelli 2000, 168; under S. Severo: *ibid.*, 188; under the port: *ibid.*, 185–6; beside the walls: pers. comm. M.G. Maioli, S. De Maria and J. Ortalli). Intriguing are the remains of (so far unique) two-storey houses in the locality Podere Gattamorta, dated by tile stamps to the second century, but perhaps active fully into the fifth or sixth (matching the sequence of many of the noted villas, active until the port or church structures were imposed or expanded – see Maioli 1992; Augenti 2006b, 23–4). Were some of the residences connected to the fleet personnel or are they simply suburban residences of some of the gentry based in Ravenna? Were some initially agricultural concerns which later became residential retreats? What remains unclear also is why certain properties seem to have persisted even after the revised, larger fifth-century fleet base comes into operation – is this perhaps a sign of continuity of ownership? How do properties relate to the pre-fifth-century port layouts? Finally, we still know too little about how the land here was exploited in terms of agriculture; clearly only future work will elucidate these questions.

Birth and Growth of a City

Crucial in the urban trajectory of Classe was the transfer of the imperial seat from Milan to Ravenna at the start of the fifth century. Alongside works in the new capital, both monumental and defensive (see Gelichi 2005; Christie and Gibson 1988), we can envisage substantial redevelopment of the port, commencing with its circuit walls – essential if the new capital was to be fully secure (and the move occurred in a time of major tension and upheaval with Visigothic incursions into north Italy). Although secure stratigraphic guides are currently lacking for Classe's walls, the chronological indicators for the port, its moles and other works strongly signify substantial efforts from the start of the fifth century ([Figure 2.4](#)).

This would match the fortification works at Rome's port city of Portus also in c. AD 400 (Coccia 1993; Keay et al. 2005. On wider defensive sequences in fifth-century Italy, see Christie 2006, 281–99). Our textual sources flag the presence within the defensive circuit at Classe of at least two ports: one called 'del *vicus Salutaris*', set in the zone of the San Severo basilica, and the other at *vicus Leprosus*, near Sant'Apollinare (LPR, HE, p.376 – *Life of John V*). There developed also a join between Classe and Ravenna, with an intervening suburb of

Caesarea, this girded under the late sixth-century Prefect Longinus by a palisade (*LPR*, HE, p.338 – *Life of Peter the Elder*).

Thus the Gothic historian Jordanes (*Getica*, ch.29) recounts how: 'The city bears three names, corresponding to the quarters into which it is divided: Ravenna, the first, Classe, the most distant, and in between, between Ravenna and the sea, Caesarea, set firmly in the plain and well suited for transports'. A twelfth-century notary document shows how memory of this triple conurbation endured even after Classe had long faded (Berti Ceroni and Smurra 2005, 172).

While Ravenna grew to be enclosed by an area of 166 hectares (much greater than its early imperial predecessor), Classe covered c. 63 ha. Potentially Caesarea could have extended over a maximum of 143.8 ha, thereby giving the Ravenna-Cesarea-Classe conurbation a total surface area of 372.4 ha. In comparison with contemporary capitals, such as Trier (285 ha), and other major centres, notably Carthage (321 ha including the port), this hypothetical total makes sense; indeed, it even suggests an effort to make Ravenna match and exceed these other ancient foci spatially.

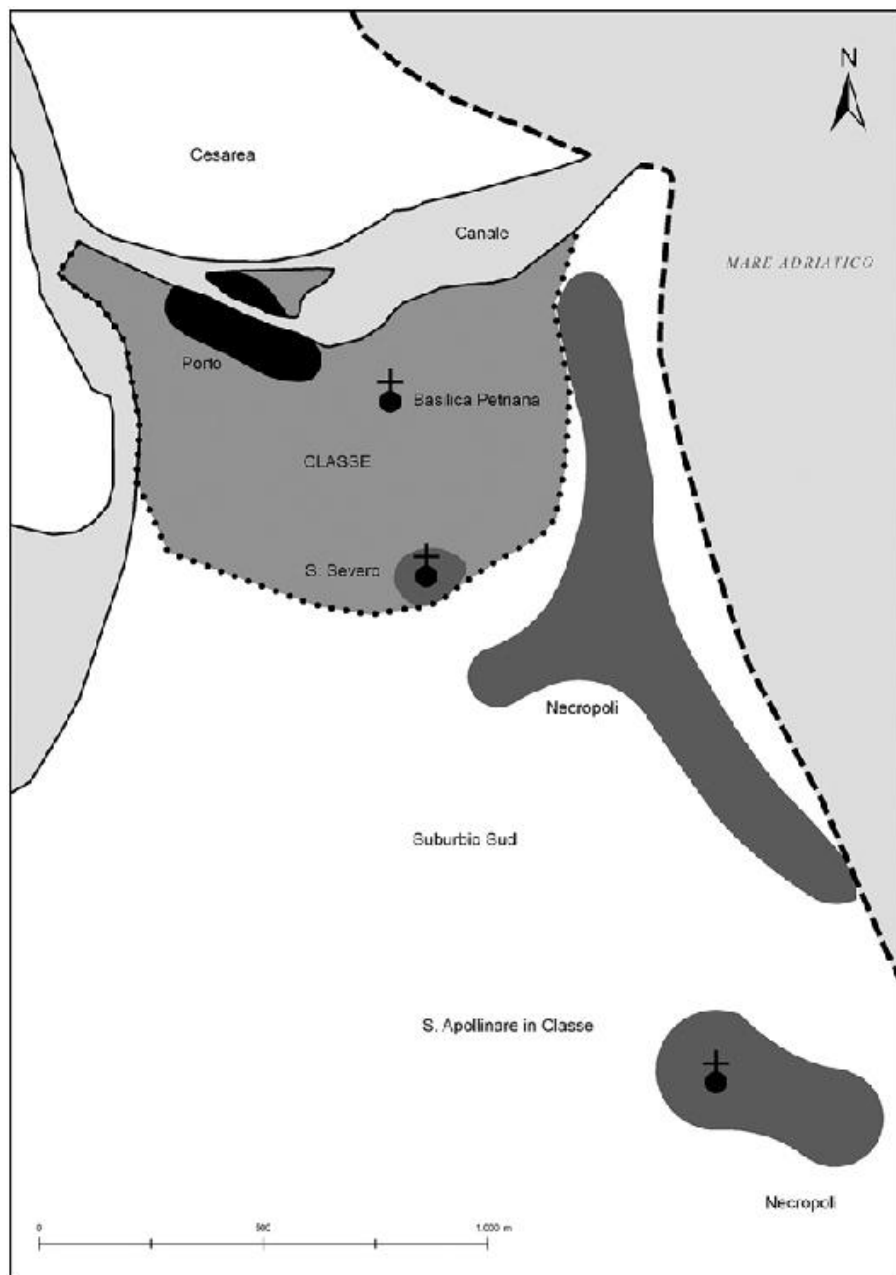


Figure 2.4 *Classe: schematic plan and presumed functions by zone*

Little is currently known regarding the main elements of urban infrastructure at reborn Classe. In terms of roads, a basalt paved road runs from the south past the basilica of San Severo, presumably towards Ravenna via Caesarea: historic maps record this as the ‘Via Vecchia di Classe’. A second routeway, identified from maps, text and air photography, cut across Classe in a NW–SE direction, passing the

Basilica Petriana; in recent times called the ‘Carara Ravegnana’ or ‘Strada Romana’ (and corresponding to the modern via Romea Vecchia), this is only attested from the tenth century. In addition, there is an excavated basalt road serving the port district flanking the canal, plus lanes joining the island at the canal’s centre. Classe and its southern suburb were also served by numerous waterways and canals, most notably the canal alongside which the port structures were built and linking the internal port basin to the sea (see Cirelli 2008, 19–23). There is mention of the river Bidente (*Bedesis*), which perhaps passed not far from the San Severo complex; the *Pantheum*, which Agnellus sited near the *Porta Salutaris* (again close to San Severo); the Candiano canal, set south of the basilica of Sant’Apollinare; and finally the *Classatellum* torrent, first recorded in the twelfth century but without secure positioning (Schmiedt 1962). Some of these watercourses no doubt were traversed by small footbridges and some by wider crossings for vehicles – as Jordanes attests for the Candiano canal (the *Pons Candidiani* and the ‘Stone bridge’); recent excavations seem to have identified a wooden bridge linking the southern bank of the port canal with the noted central island (Augenti et al. 2007a, 37).



Figure 2.5



Figure 2.6

The principal component of Classe’s infrastructure of course

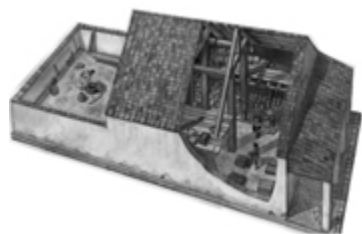
comprised the port quarter (see [Figure 2.6](#)). Excavations thus far have identified how this was articulated along a canal forming the settlement's northern limit and comprising a series of stores and workshops set chiefly in two rows, one looking onto the canal itself, and the other flanking the basalt-flagged street running parallel to this. The central island also featured storage buildings and lanes. The whole stores complex plus canal and roads were designed for rapid inflow and offloading of goods, especially foodstuffs and related containers, whose traces are more than obvious in the masses of sherds scattered all over the archaeological area and whose volume expands enormously with every new excavation trench (for example, it was calculated that the total number of ceramic fragments recovered by the Dipartimento di Archeologia between 2001 and 2005 amounted to c. 780,000 sherds). In terms of trade flow across the fifth to seventh centuries, wine principally came from the Eastern Mediterranean, while olive oil (perhaps chiefly for lighting), cereals and fish sauce, along with much in the way of table and cooking wares, were received from North Africa (see Pecci, forthcoming; Pavolini 2002). The latter region (in particular Tunisia) was, in quantitative terms, the most significant commercial player between AD 400 and 550, after which the East gains a more prominent role, if not eclipsing the consistency of African imports. There was also some trade arriving from southern Italy (e.g. wine amphorae from Calabria) to indicate further how busy the Adriatic 'corridor' had become (Cirelli 2007; Augenti et al. 2007b). Given the scale of warehousing at the port (with others perhaps in the capital itself), it is logical to assume that Classe and Ravenna became focal nodes for the redistribution of traded goods across much of northern Italy, the merchandise being far in excess of what the two cities' populations would have required. The organisation of the port quarter meanwhile points to a likely design as part of a single, integrated plan on a substantial scale: set building typologies (18 buildings and plots are so far investigated), careful spatial ordering, and rational distribution in accordance with services such as drains and lanes are strongly evident.

The excavations have also identified multiple industrial activities, including glass-working: one furnace (with related production waste), found in the 1970s at Building 6, was active from the fifth century (see Augenti, Cirelli and Tontini, forthcoming; plus, more widely, Saguì 2007). Iron-working evidence comes from Warehouse 9, relating to fifth-century output. For the sixth and seventh centuries, part-worked bone artefacts, found at Buildings 8, 17 and 18, point to other craft workshops.

The excavations have sought to explore the whole lifespan of the

port complex, spanning the fifth to ninth centuries: changes occurred of course to the space and buildings, such as with the multiple repairs to the road (the visible basalt surface relates in fact to the mid-sixth century) and changes and restorations to Warehouses 2 and 6, both gaining small internal courtyards during the sixth century. A lime-kiln was installed at Building 6 probably to facilitate such renovations. But some structures failed: the small store-building 17, for example, was destroyed by a fire in the early years of the sixth century and never rebuilt – thereby leaving an invaluable archaeological resource in its interior (see [Figure 2.7](#)); in contrast, Stores 6 and 8, both part damaged by the same fire, saw rapid restoration works (Augenti et al. 2007a, 36; Cirelli 2007). Building 6 saw fire-damage in the latter sixth century but was put back into service and remained in use until the mid-seventh century. Indeed, overall, continuity was strong into the earlier seventh century across the port zone.

But far more prominent – and enduring – in the late antique cityscape of Classe were the numerous churches established within and outside the circuit walls (see [Table 2.1](#)). Indeed, our written texts refer to a series of basilicas which in scale and investment were on a par with the imperial and royal ecclesiastical buildings of Ravenna itself. Foremost at Classe was the basilica Petriana, initiated under Bishop Peter I Chrisologus (432–450) and completed under his successor Neone around 458: this was a structure much exalted by early medieval sources for its size and wealth in marble and metalwork (LPR, HE, p. 289 – *Life of Peter*: ‘*Nulla ecclesia in aedificio maior fuit similis illa, neque in longitudine nec in altitudine; et valde exornata fuit de preciosis lapidibus et tessellis variis decorata et valde locupletata in aureo et argento et vasculis sacris, quibus ipse fieri iussit*’). Later, but before AD 519, a baptistery was added, signifying its core role to the city (LPR, HE, p. 312 – *Life of Peter II*; but this does not mean that Classe ever had its own bishop). Traditionally the basilica Petriana has been sited in the central zone of Classe, south-east of the excavated port complex; recent excavations now confirm this identification (Augenti, Boschi and Cirelli 2010).



[Figure 2.7](#)



Figure 2.8

Also belonging to the mid-fifth century is the process of monumentalising the burial place of one of the patron saints of Ravenna, namely Severus, a bishop of the fourth century, who had previously been laid to rest in a cemetery adjoining an earlier villa structure prior to the town's growth and walling. Recent excavations have demonstrated that in the first half of the fifth century a small apsed building was constructed, identifiable with the 'mausoleo di San Ruffillo' – this was recorded by Agnellus as the bishop's first monumental sepulchre and marked a first 'translation' of the saint's remains (see [Figure 2.8](#)).

In Late Antiquity veneration of local saints was of profound symbolic and real significance and the creation of appropriate venues was core to most bishops and their cities. For Classe-Ravenna, besides San Severo, a central figure was Saint Apollinaris, and we duly find a substantial sanctuary to this figure in the immediate southern suburban space of the fleet city, sited over a former cemetery, where Apollinaris had been buried. Not only was his tomb monumentalised, but the church itself was one of the largest and most decorated in all the Ravennate zone. Construction here came during the earliest stages of Byzantine rule, after conquest of the capital from the Goths (AD 540). Alongside new secular building works, investment in religious architecture ideologically reinforced the restored archbishop's authority. The Sant'Apollinare basilica rapidly became the prime local focus, being charged with more than religious duties, since it was also the repository of documents; it also hosted, from the second half of the sixth century, the tombs (many in sarcophagi) of the archbishops of Ravenna (Augenti, 2007: 198).

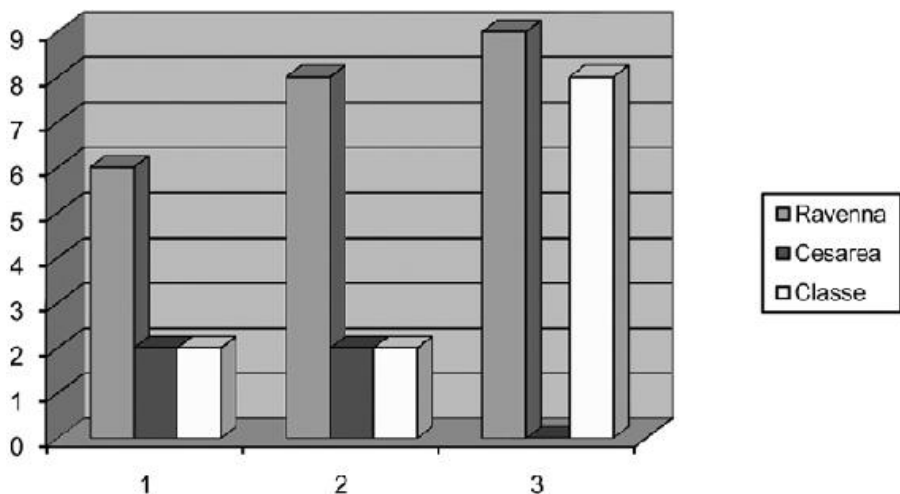


Figure 2.9 Fifth- to sixth-century ecclesiastical buildings of Ravenna, Caesarea and Classe

A further noteworthy suburban seat was the basilica dedicated to Probus, perhaps established already in the fourth century, but re-monumentalised in the sixth, as attested by fragments of good quality mosaic floor (see Farioli Campanati 1983, 43–5; Maioli and Stoppioni 1987, 87–9). More distant (2 km from Sant’Apollinare) was the basilica della Ca’ Bianca: of 21 x 42.5 m dimensions, comprising nave with side aisles and apse, plus atrium and (later) external corridors, this was flanked on the north by an octagonal structure, a presumed baptistery; mosaic traces stylistically point to an earlier sixth-century date for the church, with a likely second phase towards the mid-century (Farioli Campanati 1983, 46–50).

The last chapter in this monumental Christianisation process relates to the construction of the grand basilica of San Severo in the period AD 570–582, in a form resembling Sant’Apollinare (Figures 2.10 and 2.11). The works required levelling of residual traces of the old Roman villa here (partially excavated under the basilica’s western half) and re-working of the ancient mausoleum of San Ruffillo, requiring another translation of the saint’s body. (On older and recent excavations at San Severo see Bermond Montanari 1968; Farioli Campanati 1983, 28–40; Maioli 1992; Augenti and Bertelli 2006; Augenti 2006b; 2009.)

For the churches we can thus draw on both documentary and archaeological sources, but for other components of the urban and suburban space, texts alone (epigraphic, in papyri, etc.) give hints of district names, population quarters, working space: thus, within Classe, near to San Severo, we hear of a zone or *regio* called *vicus Salutaris* (LPR, HE, pp. 285, 337). Another intramural designation is

the area labelled *Armenia*, set near the monastery of San Giovanni, and potentially to be associated with a group of settled (with families) Armenian soldiers – a *numerus Armeniorum* is in fact firmly attested at Ravenna by texts (Farioli Campanati 1983, 51; Dédéyan 2005, 463–4). We hear also of a *vicus Leprosus*, close to Sant’Apollinare. More official structures are tantalisingly alluded to: the first is a *Palatium Classis*, whose sole reference comes in AD 456 (a palace in which the patrician Remistius was murdered: *MGH, AA, IX, Chronica minora*, I, p. 304); second is a monumental complex connected with the fleet, the *castrum praetorium*, referenced only in a sixth-century papyrus (Tjaeder 1955, I: nn.4–5, pp. 198–216 (for AD 541); discussed in Deichmann, 1989: 32–33); and third is a garden space, the *viridarium*, near which lay the church of S. Sergio (*LPR*, HE, p. 334).

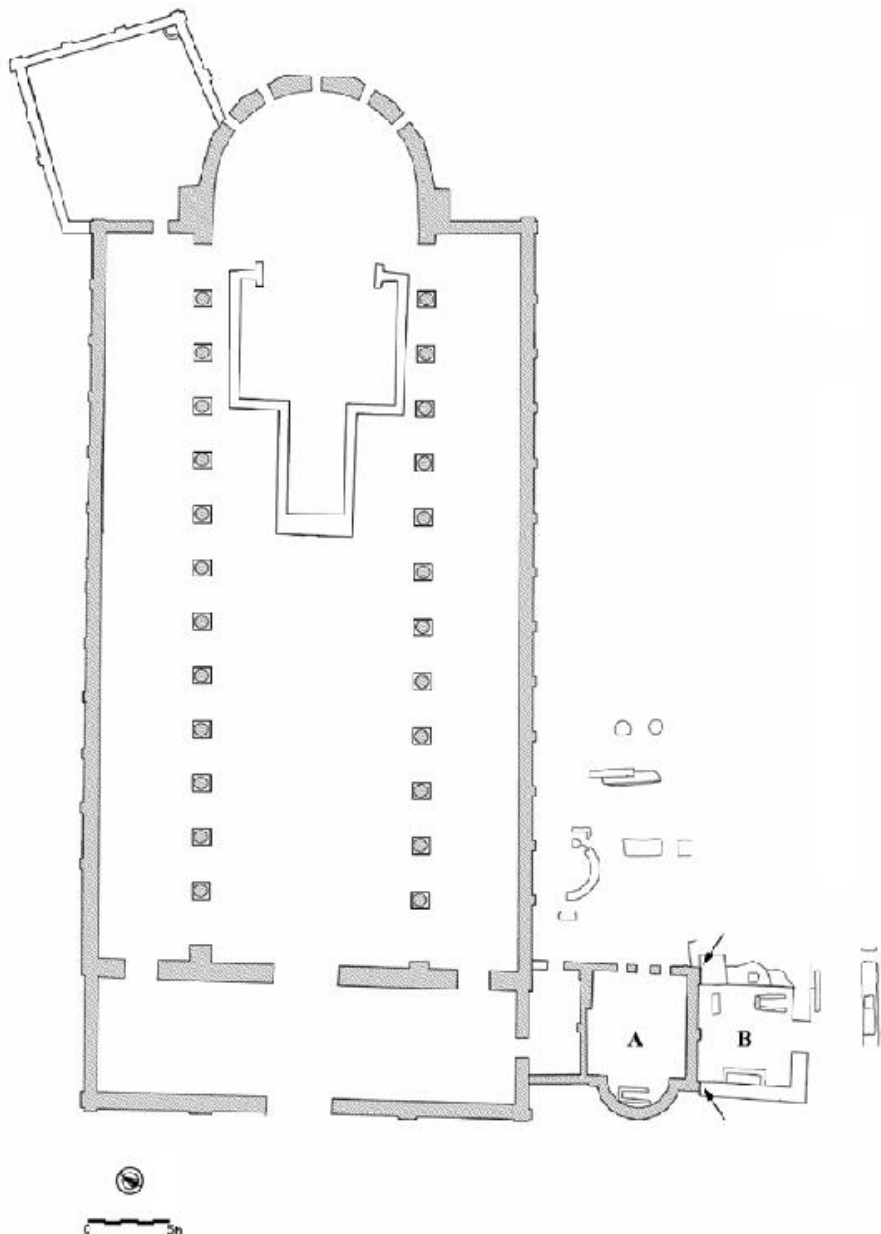


Figure 2.10 *Classe, plan of the late antique basilica of San Severo*

Little can be said of the social fabric of Roman and late antique Classe (For Ravenna's population, see Tjäder 1971; Brown 1991, 147). However, the documentary evidence points to a variety of ethnic components, including the noted Armenians: Jews and Goths are recorded (if with only one named Jew, a soapmaker called Isaac), and the church of S. Sergio was an Arian cult centre, only converted to the Orthodox faith by Archbishop Agnellus after 561; other soldiers and

merchants will have likely been from eastern Mediterranean regions. In terms of social ranking, for the sixth century we certainly hear of elites (*spectabiles*, such as the Gothic noblewoman Hildevara) and middle-ranking *virī honesti* (see Cosentino 1999). Of the professions documented, craftsmen and scribes (*forenses*, *tabellioni*) are evident (see Tjäder, 1955–82, I: 214, 376; II: 100, 126). The *virī honesti* were arguably a dominant force in both town and landscape: ‘un ceto sociale abbastanza variegato che comprende esponenti del mondo del commercio, dell’artigianato e delle professioni’ (Cosentino 1999, 31). From all this Classe appears very much its own city in Late Antiquity and not simply a centre annexed to and working for Ravenna.

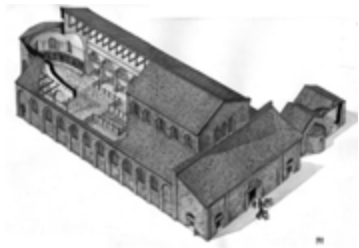


Figure 2.11

Table 2.1 Ecclesiastical buildings recorded for Classe

Building/Category	Location	Date	Notes
Basilica	Classe	450	Proba
Basilica	Classe	519	Basilica Petriana
Monastery	Classe	5th c.	di S. Ruffillo
Basilica	Classe	5th c.	di S. Eufemia <i>ad marem</i>
Basilica	Classe	556	del Beato Probo
Basilica	Classe	5th c.	di S. Apollinare in Classe
Monastery	Classe	570	di San Matteo
Monastery	Classe	570	di San Giacomo
Basilica	Classe	570	del Beato Sergio <i>iuxta viridarium</i>
Basilica	Classe	595	di San Severo
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	dei SS. Marco, Marcello e Felicula
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	dei SS. Giovanni e Stefano <i>ad Titum</i>
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	di S. Apollinare
Basilica	Classe	6th c.	di S. Eleucadio
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	di San Severo
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	di S. Martino
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	dei SS. Gaudenzio, Sergio e Teodoro
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	di S. Agnese
Monastery	Classe	6th c.	dei SS. Cosma e Damiano

We have traced something of the ‘Golden Age’ of Classe and Ravenna, but what of the port city’s decline and extinction? Problems in fact hit Classe in the second half of the sixth century: a later, eighth-century source, the *Lombard History* by Paul the Deacon, describes the port’s dramatic sack led by Faroald, the Lombard duke of Spoleto in 576 (unless much later, in 584), along with its recapture by Byzantine troops, led by Duke Droctulf in 585–586 (Paul, *HL*, III, 13 and 19). The city may have been damaged then but this was nowhere near a fatal blow, as witnessed by the completion of the San Severo basilica in the last decades of the sixth century.

Yet telling signs begin already from the early seventh century, notably in the commercial quarter, where the archaeological excavations indicate a progressive disuse of many of the warehouses: some walls start to collapse and some are robbed for materials; other stores see conversion and division into small to medium-sized habitation spaces through the blocking of spaces and the addition of rough walls. For long only two examples of this latter transformation were known (houses in Building/Warehouses 2 and 12 – Maioli and Stoppioni 1987, 41; Ortalli 1991, 179–81), but recent work shows a greater consistency and frequency of such domestic modifications, including at least two houses created over the remains of Building 8, one each at 17 and 7 (see [Figure 2.12](#)). Spatially these cover 25–33 m²; they feature brick footings (often reusing razed or levelled warehouse walls), and appear to have had timber-framed clay-bonded superstructures, perhaps with reed roofing, although some tile was used (Augenti, Cirelli and Marino 2009). Dating evidence would suggest these changes are underway from the second quarter of the seventh century, thus from the reign of Heraclius (610–641). They do not imply a cessation of port activities (see below), but could suggest a possible influx of poorer population groups, and a level of economic downturn.

Alongside the structural changes we see the appearance of burials within the built urban space, both as isolated burials but also as small groups and cemeteries, these ranging from groups of three to 17 individuals. (On the phenomenon of late antique urban burial, see Cantino Wataghin 1999, and for Ravenna see Cirelli 2008, 114–30; for analysis on tombs at Classe, see Ferreri 2009.) In all, 50 burials have been recognised thus far in excavations in the port area, none seemingly pre-dating the seventh century.

Diverse is the gathering of tombs around the intramural cult building of San Severo from the late sixth century – here the remains of the local saint will have created the desire to be buried nearby or *ad sanctos*, a trend no doubt leading to the appearance of other burials elsewhere inside Classe’s walled circuit (Augenti 2006b, 28–30;

Barbiera and Ferreri 2007).

Perhaps even more radical change came in the eighth century when the few new buildings being erected are in flimsy, perishable materials and ignore the pre-existing organisation of space: thus seven small storehouses were established over the former area of Building 7, constructed in wood, wattle and clay, with semi-sunken beaten earth floors; two of the units were for grain storage, as indicated by traces of cloth sacks still containing carbonised grain, beans and lentils (see [Figure 2.15](#)).

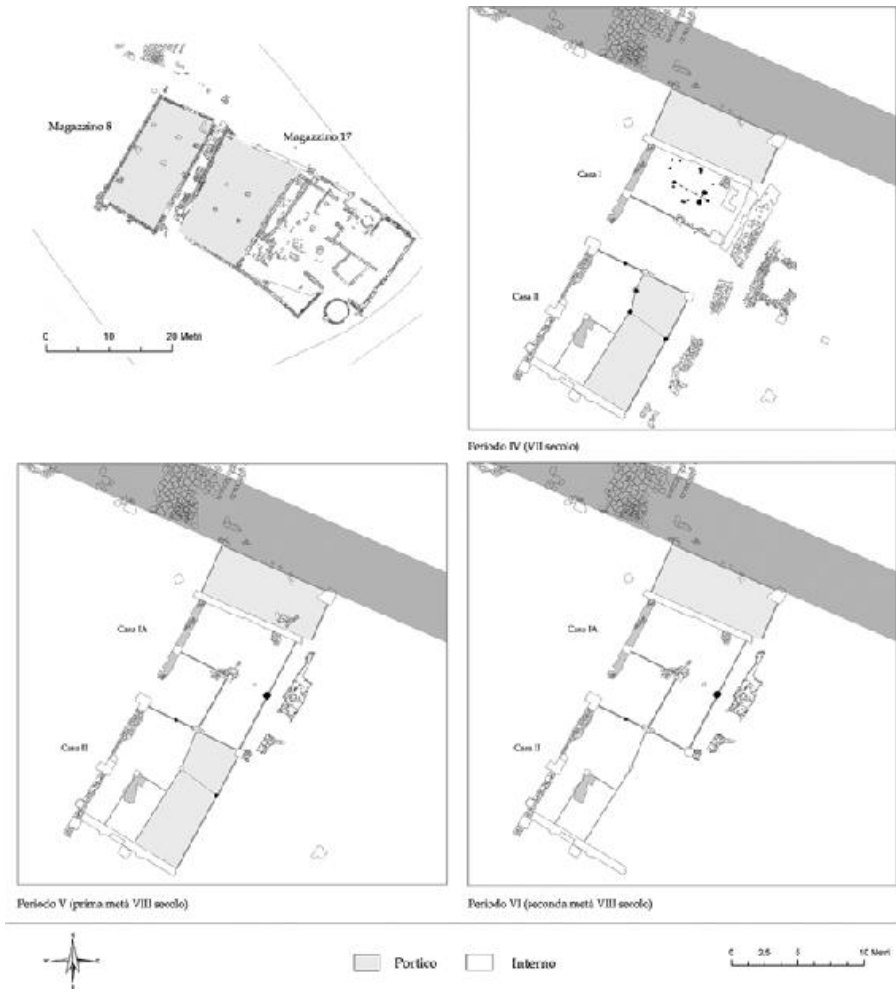


Figure 2.12 *Classe, port quarter: houses identified in Warehouse 8*

These structures, like one found in the western zone of the old port near Warehouse 14, lasted at least into the ninth century. Nonetheless, productive activities endured, attested in the remains of a clay-working facility (a tank with waterpipe and platform, probably for

softening the clay and expelling air bubbles), and in moulds for so-called ‘Sicilian’ lamps (Augenti et al. 2006, 128; Augenti et al. 2007b, 274).

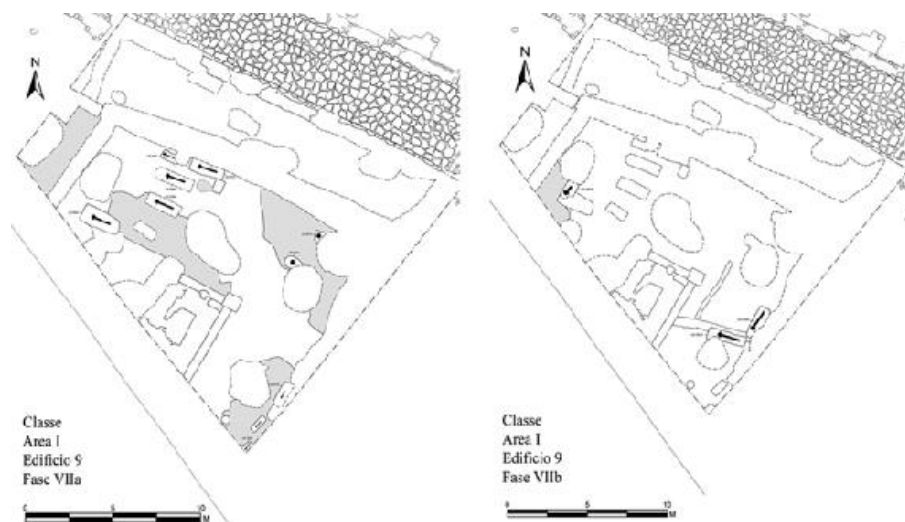


Figure 2.13 *Classe, port quarter: burials at Warehouse 9*



Figure 2.14 *Classe, San Severo complex: evolution of burial areas between the seventh and twelfth centuries*



Figure 2.15 *Classe, port quarter: plan of the eighth-century warehouses*

But there was certainly a progressive reduction in imported goods (grain, oil, wine, glass), evident in the diminished quantities of related ceramic containers. Why should this be, though, if Ravenna's Church remained, after Rome's, the largest landowner and thus consumer in seventh-century Italy (Cosentino 2005, 431–3)? Clearly it reflects a much wider change, namely the decay of the vast maritime commercial networks of the Mediterranean, the ability to support its infrastructure, and a shrinkage in wealth and market (McCormick 2001, 27–63; Wickham 2005, 708–824; Murialdo 2007). Trade did persist, however, as shown through the recovery of 'globular' amphorae of eighth-century date (see Cirelli 2009; Negrelli 2007, 454–68), but the signs are that the scales of operation and receipt were much limited, and certainly without the expectation of a redistribution of goods as perceived for the sixth-century North African and eastern imports. The end of the late antique 'commonwealth' or world-system which had connected the Mediterranean lands since the fourth century (cf. Harris 2003; 2007; Horden and Purcell 2000, 123–72), meant the slow but lasting death of Classe as a port and city.

The eighth century saw political and military impacts on Classe and Ravenna which surely hastened Classe's fate: thus in AD 712 the Lombard duke Faroald II occupied the site; further enemy occupations

came in 717–8 by King Liutprand and in the early 730s by his successor, Aistulf (Paul the Deacon, *HL*, VI, 44 and 49); the latter returned in 751 to wrest Ravenna and Classe finally from fragile Byzantine control. And while the local ninth-century historian Agnellus can still suggest a wealth and strength to the cities and their monuments in his day, we must question certainly for Classe how true this was. If we consider the residual churches at Classe, a first indication regards the large basilica Petriana, which was severely damaged by an earthquake between 726 and 744: noticeably, although its importance was recognised by the new Lombard masters of Ravenna after 751, when King Aistulf sought to rebuild the complex, this project remained uncompleted and the site's materials and archaeological traces subsequently disappear from view. In the ninth century we also hear of the demolition of S. Eufemia *ad Mare* (*LPR*, *HE*, p. 282 – *Life of Probus*). Elsewhere the main churches presumably saw some maintenance, although visible embellishments are few (bar the likely tenth-century bell-tower and a ninth-century ciborium at Sant'Apollinare, and a further ciborium at S. Eleucadio) (*LP* II, pp. 31–2). Deterioration – partly tied to a high water table – must also have forced the hands of the remaining Church authorities to translate some of the various saints' remains to safer premises in Ravenna (e.g. Saint Apollinaris; but he was later restored – see Giovannini and Ricci 1985, 60–61); and a low ecclesiastical population is perhaps reflected in the recorded theft of some relics in this period: Aistulf removed the relics of S. Eleucadio to Pavia in the 750s; San Severo's relics (along with those of his wife and son) were taken by the Frankish cleric Felix in 836 and passed to Bishop Otgarius of Mainz (Benericetti 1994, 77–8; though Caroli 2006, 21–2, thinks the event may have never happened).

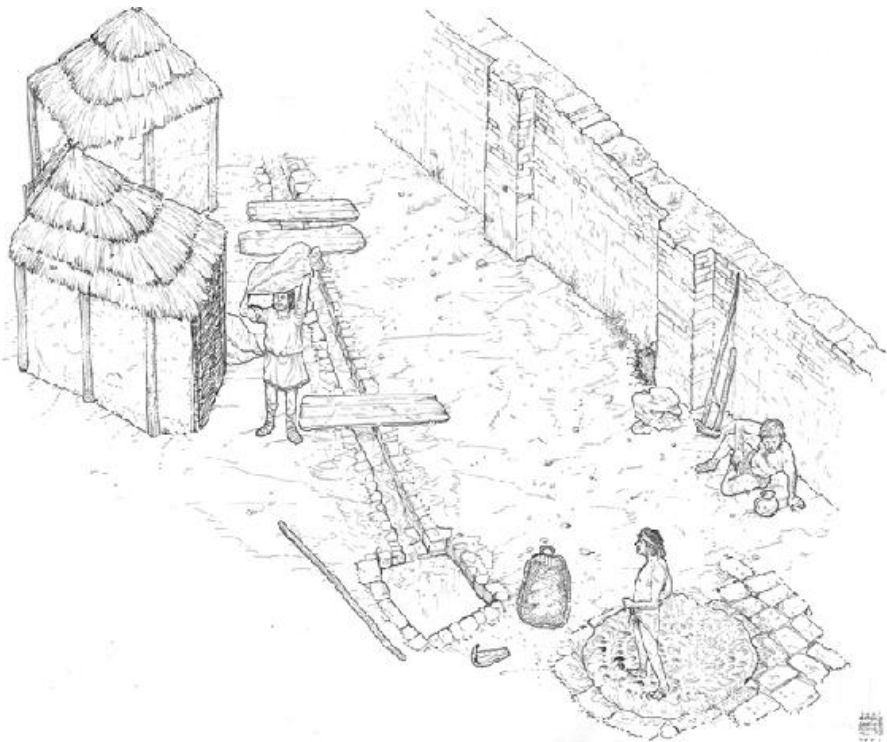


Figure 2.16 *Classe, port quarter: reconstruction drawing of the eighth-century warehouses (Design by Giorgio Albertini)*

Churches, timber houses, stores, trackways, burials and workshops thus signify a residual, but much reduced eighth- and ninth-century Classe, a dishomogeneous and discontinuous townscape with both active and inactive spaces. But this is an image rather typical for Italy and in fact for much of the Mediterranean world in this epoch and yet this site still formed a centre intimately attached to Ravenna, which was still a prominent political, religious, cultural and commercial focus in AD 800. Where we are lucky of course is in having available the archaeological resource of Classe to chart this mix of physical disintegration and yet continuity.

But did Classe itself still count as a city in AD 800? If we use the contemporary Agnellus, the answer would be 'no': on more than one occasion he defines this as a *civitas destructa* or as *civitas dudum Classis*. He is using these terms in direct contrast to Ravenna, and using these perhaps to scare its inhabitants, proffering the spectre of a lost city, as the possible fate of Ravenna if they did not take care to act correctly and to guard their still resplendent centre. There is a slight contradiction, however, in how Agnellus refers elsewhere to a *bandus Classensis*, i.e. a unit of 200 soldiers forming part of the Ravennate army, which may indicate troops enrolled from the old port area,

unless it instead relates simply to an inherited unit designation (*LPR*, *HE*, p. 370). Salvatore Cosentino (2005, 410–11) has argued for a residual population of 600 inhabitants for ninth-century Classe – this based, in fact, on the noted *bandus* and associated families. If correct, did these families gather around the monumental (or at least surviving) churches as well as in the port area (as attested archaeologically)? Were these churches the last ‘flags’ of continuity in an otherwise robbed, ruinous and part-buried townscape? It is hard to visualise the workings and movements of these remnant groups of clerics, servants, soldiers and artisans, but no doubt some cultivation occurred around the churches and houses, and presumably passing pilgrims and tradesmen found respite here too.

One of the larger ‘flags’ of resistance was the basilica of San Severo, to which was added in the tenth century a Benedictine monastery. Striking is the reference to the visit – one of many to Ravenna via Classe – by the German emperor Otto I in 967, when he is recorded as staying in a lordly residence (a *mansio domnicata*) close by the basilica – potentially the abbot’s guesthouse, perhaps fashioned from a surviving late Roman *domus* (Warner 2006; cf. Brühl 1954 and Bougard 1986 for *Klosterpfalzen*. Otto III stayed in a ‘palace’ attached to a monastery on the Palatine in Rome at the very start of the tenth century: Augenti 1996, 74–5). Perhaps not just the basilica and the importance of the saint’s relics, but also the memory of Classe inspired Otto’s visit. The monastery itself persisted, and in the twelfth century a substantial bell-tower was added, built using reclaimed bricks. No doubt other basic repairs to the ancient complex were carried out by using materials drawn from the surroundings, whether brick, marble or lime. It would have been a peculiar fate to see this site become an increasing island as the last traces of the city disappeared from view in the fields surrounding it. Indeed, in the tenth century, we hear for the southern suburban zone how people stayed in the ruins of the basilica del Beato Probo, while huntsmen rested their dogs here (cited in Ricci 1989, 541).

Only Sant’Apollinare, set outside the old urban area, matched the continuity exhibited by San Severo, and, intriguingly, this saw far less change to the original structure. It is not chance that, in many cartographic illustrations of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, these two edifices are shown as the only surviving monuments at Classe; these maps record these as ‘Chiesa di Classe’ or ‘Classe fuori’. Otherwise there is ‘desert’ around or forest (the growth of the famous ‘pineta’ or pinegroves, a core element to the later landscape of the area) – most fitting for the few medieval monks. The final episode in this increasingly quiet story dates back to 1822 and the definitive destruction of San Severo. And yet, even at this stage, the first

stirrings of archaeological interest in the lost city of Classe that had surrounded San Severo were just beginning.

Future Targets and Techniques

Having explored the past of Classe and the varied archaeologies that have been made here thus far, a final comment can be made on the future of Classe.

Systematic excavations have now been ongoing at Classe for 10 years and, currently, work continues at the complex of San Severo, the Basilica Petriana and the town walls. A new component of the standard research work at Classe is geophysical survey, with some notable results already emerging. More generally, scrutiny is being targeted at aspects such as building techniques, the quantitative analysis of the finds, and the use of technologies, all these putting Classe at the forefront of urban study in Italy. The University of Bologna, in collaboration with RavennAntica and the Soprintendenza, has collated all the data into an active GIS and is creating a ‘Carta del Potenziale Archeologico di Classe’, which will be the essential tool for helping frame current work and guide the next phases of research (Augenti 2011). Changes and expansions are happening also regarding communication and display: the Parco Archeologico is undergoing upgrading, and the new museum, housed in a former sugar factory behind the Basilica di Sant’Apollinare, will be the motor and heart to this revised Parco, displaying the major and other finds from excavations in Classe as well as from Ravenna, these brought together to tell in visual diachronic detail the history of this vast combined urban area and its territory from foundations to the present.

Much hard work has been done to start, pursue and develop the excavations at Classe and to publicise their value to both locals and to the academic community. The buried past of the ancient port city is a vital archaeological and historical resource; our project and our ability to explore and question that past, in its varied formats, through an array of modern techniques, will undoubtedly provide even more crucial data for understanding urban and economic forms and evolutions across Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Italy and the wider Mediterranean.

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Chapter 3

Potentia: A Lost New Town

Frank M.R. Vermeulen

Historical Context and Research History

Today, not much reminds the occasional traveller along the rather touristy central Adriatic Italian coast of the existence of the once vibrant Roman colonial town of *Potentia*, located near the modern town of Porto Recanati (Le Marche region). The coastal site, where in 184 BC officials and *agrimensores* delineated the new living spaces and units for those Roman citizens who were involved in the incorporation of this part of the peninsula into the Roman Republic, now lies mostly under grass and arable land, and is crossed by a busy coastal road and railway. Its position, barely a metre higher than the rest of the plain, and set on an almost N–S oriented beach ridge of sand, clay and local gravel beds, hardly changes our perception of a generally flat and unimpressive terrain. Looking at this landscape one is also not immediately informed about the original position of the city lying just north of the main Roman river bed of the Potenza (the ancient *Flosis*), as the present-day stream now flows more than 1 km to the north – a result of late and post-medieval human interference with its course (see Alfieri 1947; 1949). Only recent geo-archaeological mapping of the ancient coastal plain around *Potentia* by means of augering and geo-electrical measurements (see especially Goethals et al. 2005; 2006; 2009; Corsi et al. 2009) allows us to imagine the original situation.

And yet this river mouth area, at the eastern end of a valley corridor connecting the Adriatic with the upper Tiber region and ultimately with Rome, and traversed by a *diverticulum* of the major highway of the *Via Flaminia*, was once a very strategic and dynamic sector (see [Figure 3.1](#)). With the foundation in the early years of the second century BC of the coastal colony of *Potentia*, the whole area of northern *Picenum* entered a definitive phase of urbanisation (see Alfieri 1977; Moscatelli 1985; Paci 1991; Delplace 1993). According to the few direct written sources, the colony probably soon gained, in or by 174 BC, a circuit wall, a street network, a temple for Jupiter and a forum (Liv. XLI.27, 1 and 10–13). Official sources for the subsequent history of the town are, however, minimal to non-existent, although a few written testimonies reveal something of its ups and

downs: thus Cicero mentions that in 56 BC a major earthquake destroyed part of the town (*de Har. Resp.*, 28, 62); epigraphic evidence attests *Potentia*'s flourishing development from the Augustan age fully into the second century (Paci and Percossi Serenelli 2005). The lack of substantial epigraphic survivals from the third century AD could point to a decline in prosperity and although the city became a bishop's seat around 400, it clearly did not outlast the Early Middle Ages (Alfieri 1985). As this chapter will show, to understand the topographical and structural development of this new town and to perceive its deconstruction one necessarily has to turn to archaeological research and evidence.



Figure 3.1 Figure 3.2



Figure 3.2

The archaeological site of *Potentia* was first located by Nereo Alfieri, a specialist in ancient topography from the University of Bologna, during the late 1940s (Alfieri 1949), but rescue-excavations directed by Liliana Mercado of the regional Soprintendenza in the 1960s–70s had to be awaited before architectural remains were investigated *in situ*. During exploratory digs in an area for gravel exploitation, Mercado revealed parts of the northern cemetery of the city (some 400 graves) and elements of a housing sector, now recognised as part of the town's north-eastern corner (Mercando et al. 1974; Mercado 1979). A later study by Moscatelli of a series of good vertical aerial

photographs (notably RAF pictures of WWII) helped determine many indications of the town's regular street grid (Moscatelli 1985), while Paci has produced important analyses of all known monuments and inscriptions (Paci 1995; Paci and Percossi Serenelli 2005). Between 1985 and 2006 regular excavation campaigns, under the direction of Edvige Percossi of the Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici delle Marche, have been organised in one particular sector of the monumental centre of the city. These have identified a late Republican temple, surrounded by a portico and other buildings of Republican and imperial date, including a possible *macellum* and two large private houses or *domus* – these only partly excavated (Percossi Serenelli 1990; 1995; 2001).

Although these excavations produced crucially important data regarding the chronological development and some idea of the architectural articulation of a distinct part of the city centre, a more holistic topographical approach was deemed necessary to understand the wider picture of the city's plan and development. This aim was made possible during the Potenza Valley Survey Project, initiated under my direction in 2000 and involving a long-term study of the whole valley from the Iron Age to the early medieval period. As part of this mostly survey-based project, a series of intra-site city surveys was initiated on the four abandoned Roman town sites in the valley: the colony of *Potentia* on the coast and the *municipia* of *Ricina*, *Trea* and *Septempeda* in the interior. Most fieldwork has since 2002 been concentrated so far on *Potentia* and involved first of all very intensive aerial coverage (Figure 3.2), flying in different seasons and photographing from two types of airborne platforms, a regular plane and a so-called *helikite*. Data capture was via regular analogue and (since 2003) digital aerial photography, while in recent years also experiences with Near Infra Red and Ultra Violet photography have proven very useful. In addition a micro-topographical model of the town area was produced, using detailed geomatics, while geomorphological approaches enabled better insights into site location and landscape context. Furthermore, the former urban area was the subject of intensive grid-based artefact surveys. That part of the wider urban area, inside as well as outside the wall circuit, which is currently used as arable land, was subdivided into regular units and large samples of datable ceramics, building materials and other artefacts were systematically collected and processed. But most importantly, the intramural parts of the site not affected by modern disturbances (some 70 per cent) were completely surveyed by geophysics, essentially a combination of resistivity, electromagnetic (Figure 3.3) and ground penetrating radar. For this work the Ghent team was assisted by crews from the Universities of Southampton

(APSS) and Ljubljana and by the small firm Eastern Atlas. It is vital to stress that these intensive field surveys were carried out in close collaboration with the geomorphological team of Ghent University in order to take into account biases induced by physical processes at the site, such as erosion and riverside sedimentation. A final core action has been re-analysis of the older excavation data, and, thanks to close collaboration with the Soprintendenza and Edvige Percossi, a new study of the material and related structures from all previous excavations in the town's north-eastern quarter, and of the still unpublished data and finds from the excavations near the Republican sanctuary situated at the heart of *Potentia*, has been undertaken. We mention in particular, fuller ceramic analyses by H. Verreyke and P. Monsieur. These have especially allowed more defined chronological interpretations as well as more comprehensive GIS-based cartographic integration of all structural data. Finally, between 2007 and 2010, the team also undertook limited stratigraphic excavations in the area of the western gate in order to check the validity of some survey results and to gain new data regarding the topography and chronology of the city's monumental limits, including the circuit wall, the road system and the funerary area immediately to the west.

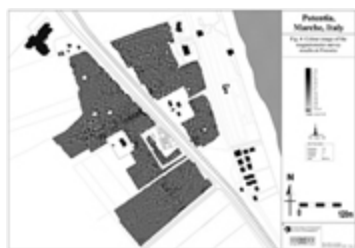


Figure 3.3



Reconstructing the Town Layout

After some eight years of intensive new fieldwork on and around the *colonia* of *Potentia* a first really detailed urban plan is now available (Figure 3.4). It comprises the exact location of the town wall, including the three (or possibly four) city gates, the full street network, the forum and several other monumental complexes, many units of city housing, three extramural funerary areas and a large segment of the suburban and rural settlement system and roads belonging to the city's *territorium*. Although some geomorphological constraints mask the visibility of the ancient structures, especially in the western and southern parts of *Potentia*, we can clearly distinguish a strictly rectangular town plan of c. 525 x 343 m (almost 18 hectares *intra muros*), laid out parallel with the coast. The urban area is subdivided by a regular network of streets oriented parallel with the walls, thus forming city blocks or *insulae* (a minimum of 58) of different dimensions. Fairly central to the plan are the principal roads, the *cardo* and *decumanus maximus*, with the forum square set south west of their crossroads.

From the (new and old) archaeology and the restricted historical information, we can now propose three major phases in the development of the urban plan of Republican and early imperial *Potentia* (Vermeulen and Verhoeven 2006). Phase I relates to the early years of the official foundation of the colony in 184 BC, and represents the initial settling of the arriving colonists. The chosen town area, maybe surrounded by a ditch (*fossa*) and earthen bank (*agger*), covered only c. 525 x 300 m, and was of NNW–SSE orientation, its shape likely conditioned by the presence of the longitudinal beach ridge.

Soon after, in 174 BC according to Livy, the site of the colony was fully urbanised: thanks to the financial intervention of censor Fulvius Flaccus, the 'military-looking' settlement developed into a real town with appropriate structures encouraging full social and economic evolution. These structures, we are told, consisted of a temple for Jupiter, a circuit wall with three arched gates, a regular street network with sewers, an aqueduct, and a portico with shops to close the forum square. Current archaeological data tally closely with this detailed historical information for *Potentia*'s Phase II: (i) traces have been explored of the circuit wall (built of fine ashlar sandstone) and of at least one gate during the 2007–10 excavations (Vermeulen, forthcoming), while two other gates are presumed on the basis of survey evidence; (ii) the oldest phase of the street system was

uncovered during the excavations of the *decumanus maximus* near the West Gate, while sewer structures were found in this same area and near the excavated temple; (iii) the rectangular forum with flanking portico and *tabernae* has been identified through electromagnetic surveys at the *cardo-decumanus* crossroads, but its chronological evolution and the character of some of the adjacent (public?) buildings remains to be established; and (iv) the documented Temple of Jupiter possibly equates with the excavated Republican temple, built in the second century BC directly east of the forum; alternatively, structures revealed by survey on the northern side of the forum could belong to the early sanctuary mentioned by Livy.

The still somewhat hypothetical Phase III concerns an enlargement of the walled space, some time after the mid-first century BC. We can suggest an enlargement of 50 m to the east, with the now redundant old eastern wall replaced by a street – as reflected by a larger and more pronounced trace in the aerial photographs than most other streets – and the new wall (with gate?) built on the edge of the beach area. Support comes from excavation evidence, such as the lack of early structures in the north-eastern corner of the city (excavated by Mercado in the 1970s) and the discovery of a destruction layer in the temple sector – the latter dated to around the mid-first century BC, coinciding with Cicero's mention of a major earthquake destroying *Potentia* (Percossi Serenelli 2001, 39). Potentially the town suffered much in this catastrophe, thus requiring major reorganisation and rebuilding in the following decades.

Further observations can be made about the topography and functional zoning within and around the city limits. Inside the walled city other public buildings located so far comprise the excavated temple and *macellum* directly east of the forum, and a small theatre near the eastern city wall and possible baths building in the south. The geophysical surveys helped to distinguish remains and partial plans of many housing units, some of *domus* type, others clearly *tabernae*, and others simple habitations and shops, these spread all over the many *insulae*. Outside the walls the three (aerially-)detected roads leaving the city gates to the west, north and south/south west, were bordered by cemeteries with funerary monuments facing onto the roadway. Some of these immediate suburban areas also saw industrial activities: for example, between circa 120 BC and AD 100, several flourishing amphora production workshops (connected with the wine- and olive-producing villas in *Potentia*'s immediate hinterland) were active in spaces directly north and south of the city (Vermeulen et al. 2009; Monsieur, forthcoming). Indications from aerial survey of possible harbour facilities at the mouth of the river Potenza, just south of the town, enhance our understanding of the

city's wider topographic articulation, while recent research has also highlighted aspects of the well organised 'centuriated' agrarian landscape beyond the city limits (Corsi 2008; Corsi and Vermeulen 2009). These data all seem to sketch what can be termed the 'classic' urban picture, as shown by the excavations in the temple area, demonstrating a great vitality to the town across the Late Republic and early Empire. According to the dates of the portico surrounding the original temple and of the *macellum* to the north and a luxurious building (*domus*?) to the east of the temple, the city centre was especially monumentalised in the time of Augustus; further expansion and investment came under Trajan and the early Antonines, before major problems hit in the 'Third-century Crisis'.

Late Roman *Potentia*

During the early Empire Roman towns were expressions of both central authority and private patronage, exhibited in an array of institutions and monuments, amenities and services: streets and walls, baths and sewers are all structural manifestations of an active urban society. From the third century onward, however, religious buildings and walls came to be the defining features of many urban landscapes, while many other structures showed progressive signs of decline and transformation. A decline in public and private expenditure on other urban monuments encouraged the slow but steady erosion of civic amenities and infrastructure (Ward-Perkins 1996). For Italy there is general agreement that the late and post-Roman period saw a widespread and marked decline in town-dwelling, with various Roman centres progressively abandoned and those that survived were less populous and certainly less monumental than before. Indeed, it can be claimed that one third of the 372 cities listed by Pliny in the eleven Augustan regions in Italy were no longer occupied in the post-Roman period. However, we must bear in mind that the abandonment of cities was probably a gradual phenomenon, very rarely with wholly abrupt ends (Delogu 1990, 147–8).

This decay is also obvious in the Adriatic part of central Italy, even if individual cities might enjoy widely divergent fortunes within a region, and despite the fact that some late Roman political developments selectively favoured town life in the north-eastern part of the peninsula. The choice of Ravenna by emperor Honorius as the new capital of Italy in 402, at the time of Visigothic incursions in the north, entailed an enormous building programme here (numerous churches, strong city walls, etc.), in complete contrast with other towns at that time, which were busy shrinking within their circuit walls. Its choice for reasons of defence (due to its situation in

marshland of difficult access) certainly affected the evolution of the coastal part of northern Adriatic Italy; further change followed the reconquest of Italy by the Byzantine Empire from the 530s, with the Adriatic becoming a major trade and military communications channel with the eastern Mediterranean (Christie 1995, 100). But even though the city remained the Byzantine capital of Italy until the mid-eighth century, little or no building work occurs in Ravenna beyond 570, and also its port area Classe suffered economic collapse after 600 (see Augenti, this volume).

Warfare – barbarian raids and civil conflict – had a serious impact on many towns of central Adriatic Italy, such as with the documented devastation by the Luthungi in AD 271. Archaeological indicators exist in terms of destruction deposits, but also in losses of public buildings and new defensive wall building – at Rimini, for example, the amphitheatre (probably now out of use for entertainment) was made into part of the city walls (Rambaldi 2009, 211–12). In the case of *Potentia*, as noted above, direct written sources for later Roman events are extremely poor: epigraphic data are practically non-existent from the third century onwards and from surviving literary sources we can do little more than identify that the town was an episcopal see by the beginning of the fifth century (Alfieri 1977). This status is of course important since bishops gradually took on the role of providers and distributors of wealth, which formerly lay with the civil authorities (*curiales*). Faustinus, the first known bishop of *Potentia*, in fact played an important role on the fifth Carthaginian Council (also known as the ‘African Synod’), where he acted as the legate of Pope Zosimus. We should assume that a church was built in *Potentia* around 400, maybe at the same time or somewhat later than the closure and dismantling of the (excavated) temple east of the forum; however, archaeology still has to prove the existence of such a new Christian sanctuary. Sources record the presence of a bishop in *Potentia* up to the beginning of the sixth century, which at least implies some form of steady settlement continuity throughout the fifth.

Even if the late Roman developments of *Potentia* are at the moment only visible via a thin body of archaeological evidence, some of these can now be summarised with some certainty (Vermeulen and Verreyke, forthcoming). Part of this information is derived from our recent artefact surveys (Verreyke and Vermeulen 2009), while other data were obtained during old and new excavation work and from related pottery studies (Verreyke 2007). The intensive artefact surveys organised by the Ghent team in 2002–03 were spread over all the city area (Vermeulen 2008) and although visibility at surface level was slightly obstructed by the characteristics of the present-day landscape, and information from the fifth century onwards is probably biased as

a result of diminishing imports, some important observations were possible. Firstly it must be observed that almost no late Roman settlement material was recovered in the immediate extramural areas, where, by contrast, early Roman finds are frequently found. Especially south of the city, near the probable river mouth harbour, but also in other areas, such as near the West Gate, abundant early imperial pottery concentrations suggest that some suburban zones were much frequented, if not permanently inhabited, during the first two centuries of our era. The nature of these finds, such as fragments of *dolia* and building materials, seems to exclude that these finds are solely connected with funerary areas. The absence of conclusively late materials among these scatters suggests that the city shrank back within its walled confines from the third century.

When we scrutinise the chronology of the intramural finds of *Potentia*, we can see an evolution in the occupation pattern. It seems that during the fourth century and the first half of the fifth, the bulk of the walled area was still occupied. From the mid-fifth century onwards, occupation probably contracted, since material becomes restricted to the northern area of the city, the central area around the forum and the south-central zone to its south (Figure 3.5). The entire eastern section of the city lacks finds of post-c. 450. During the first half of the sixth century AD, the occupation areas contracted further as shown by the limited and sparse distribution of finds. Naturally, we must take into account that the surface scatters do not always indicate permanent occupation and deposited waste of an abandoned area might give the same pattern of surface finds. Moreover, we cannot estimate the level of post-depositional processes displacing the archaeological record. However, comparison of data from the north-eastern quarter of *Potentia* with the surface scatter of the adjacent area shows a very similar pattern. The excavations in 2007–10 of the West Gate show that the surface scatter almost fully matched the chronological range attested through excavation (Vermeulen et al. 2009, 92–3). Thanks to this approach of linking the surface finds to the ‘in situ’ situation, we can better appraise the post-depositional processes which bring the artefacts to the surface. Finally, it is important to highlight how the extreme south-eastern sector of *Potentia* was completely devoid of surface finds. Integrating very revealing aerial photographs, geomorphological survey, geophysical prospection and a detailed microtopographic mapping by the Ghent team revealed that this area was flooded and thus destroyed by the river Potenza – an event probably of the Middle Ages, although there is no evidence to suggest that a natural disaster was responsible for the final abandonment of the city.

What of evidence from specific excavated town spaces? Those

trenches in the city centre, conducted by Percossi since the 1980s in an area that we can now define as lying immediately east of the forum square, revealed some features typical in the development of late Roman towns in Italy, where partial abandonment, subdivision and encroachment on the sites of former grand buildings can be observed (Figure 3.6). Typically the forum, some of its public buildings and the nearby *domus*, which were maintained in many towns into the fifth or early sixth century, see division into smaller rooms for multiple dwelling. Encroachment by poorer dwellings, or commonly, by small commercial and artisanal or industrial units, frequently occurs over existing public spaces. In the heart of *Potentia* already by the third century, the former public *macellum* was restructured and probably used as a metal workshop. However, this can still be connected with the economic revival of the late third and fourth century when the central area of the city was seemingly reorganised, and with finds (e.g. the coin series) suggesting a quite positive atmosphere. By the end of the fourth century, the entire pagan temple complex was transformed: the temple itself was demolished, the surrounding portico closed off and the area in front of the temple levelled up to the base of the podium (Percossi Serenelli 2001). Such large-scale transformation of the monumental centre testifies to a certain level of organised building activity, although subsequent constructions were limited to the subdivision of former buildings with re-used building material or with timber or other less durable materials. The former portico underwent several subdivisions, while the area in front of the temple and the complex's former entrance onto the *decumanus* became a closed courtyard. Sixth-century finds are attested here and the latest perhaps run into the seventh, but it remains unclear what exactly was the character of this late presence in the urban core (Verreyke 2007).



Figure 3.5 Results of the 2002 grid-based artefact survey by Ghent University over Potentia, highlighting the datable late Roman finds. Note the uneven distribution of the pottery in certain areas of the intramural space.

In the north-eastern corner of Potentia, where parts of an *insula* were rather rapidly excavated in the 1970s (Mercando 1979), the finds revealed occupation only up to the early fifth century. Eleven graves

were located above the severely robbed late Roman (early fifth-century) occupation levels and on the N–S oriented *cardo* (Figure 3.7). One of the skeletons was buried in an amphora, the others were covered with a series of tiles or with a tuff slab. The graves were very modest and could therefore not be dated precisely, but their stratigraphic setting probably places them in the later fifth and/or sixth centuries AD. In contrast, the 385 graves of the La Pineta necropolis, just north of town, run from the second century BC to the fourth century AD (Mercando et al. 1974, 142–430; Percossi Serenelli 2001, 44). However, the excavator, Liliana Mercando, identified a nucleus of later graves in the south-western area of the necropolis, which she dated to the fifth century. Potentially this late extramural group in the south-western part of the ‘La Pineta’ necropolis is connected to the intramural graves set in the north-eastern *insula* of *Potentia*. If so, this implies that the northern city wall, of uncertain condition by that time, no longer defined a deliberate and real limit to the town.

Finally, in a third sector of the city, the Ghent University excavations of the West Gate have opened another window on these later changes. It seems that the town’s monumental defences here and the *decumanus maximus*, entering the city from its hinterland, persisted without much change, apart from a (fourth-century?) phase of some restructuring (perhaps just repairs to the gate), throughout the fifth century. Judging from the quality of the fourth-/ fifth-century *decumanus maximus* itself, repairs of the street surface, now a mixture of gravel and tile fragments, are poorer than before. The sixth century, however, brought a rapid decline to both city wall and gate, while the road was gradually transformed into a very simple trackway (Figure 3.8).

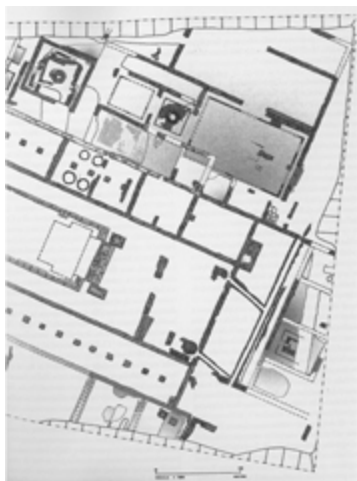


Figure 3.6



Figure 3.7

At the moment we lack evidence for the construction of any revised and reduced urban curtain, i.e. a citadel. The quality of our aerial photographs and the results of a full magnetic survey of the town surface seem to exclude this scenario. In this way *Potentia* probably had a very different development to its twin town on the coast of northern Marche at *Pisaurum* (Pesaro), which was established as a colony with the same urban outline and in the same year as *Potentia*, but where in fact the late third-century AD walls of Pesaro after the incursions of the Iuthungi (AD 271) surrounded a smaller city area than before, which fits well with a presumed general depopulation of central Adriatic Italy around that time (Alfieri 1985; Luni 2003; Dall'Aglia and Castagnoli 2002, 22). The new walls at Pesaro now girded only the former monumental city core and left outside all former suburban quarters. The walled nucleus, however, also featured more open areas, leaving space for new cemeteries and for market gardening, demonstrating the beginning of the ruralisation of the town.



Figure 3.8

Abandonment and Dismantlement

The passage of the Goths in the early fifth century, civil wars and, much later, the Byzantine-Gothic Wars (535–554) were very destructive for *Picenum* and for many of Italy's towns and lands. References in the sources and in the laws to military damage, severe food shortages and disease reveal these as extremely arduous times.

Procopius, reporting on the sixth-century Byzantine-Gothic War, indeed claimed that over 50,000 people died in *Picenum* as a result of plague, a disaster no doubt connected with the unstable security and political situation of most of the peninsula (Alfieri 1977; Bocci 2004, 39). Centralised settlements inevitably would be among the first to be hit by this calamity.

Study of the lists of bishops' seats indicates that towns in elevated locations in the landscape survived better, as a result of their better defensibility. The inland towns of the Potenza valley are never mentioned after these wars. On the coast, even *Potentia* disappeared from the lists after the fifth century. Higher altitude survivors in this general area of Marche include *Cingulum*, *Matelica*, *Camerinum* and *Firmum*. After the invasion and territorial expansion of the Lombards (from 580 onwards), a differing pattern of urban survival can be seen in the central Adriatic: the Byzantine Pentapolis province was fairly resilient and displayed a higher rate of urban survival (chiefly along the *via Aemilia*), but not one coastal city survived south of Numana (Alfieri 1985, 237). Dall'Aglia (2004, 90) is too positive in his views of urban survival in Pentapolis: many were abandoned (e.g. *Suasa*, *Pitinum Mergens*, *Pitinum Pisaurense*), and others declined considerably (*Tifernum Mataurense* and *Forum Sempronii*) (Bernacchia 1997; Destro 1999). Furthermore, in the Lombard controlled region of the Esino river all Roman cities between Jesi and Fabriano were abandoned (*Planina*, *Attidium* and *Tuficum*). In sum, of the 38 Roman cities in Le Marche, once cited by Pliny, only 23 became episcopal seats, six were reduced to simple villages and nine others were never heard of again. As we know from *Potentia*, even some of the bishops' seats eventually vanished.

As at many 'extinct' cities in Italy it is still very difficult to date the final abandonment of *Potentia*. But we do need to make a distinction between the end of the *urban character* of the city and possible subsequent *dispersed* occupation within these former urban seats. Contexts excavated in the temple area at *Potentia* point to a regular occupation into the early sixth century AD at the latest. However, there are some features in the area of the eastern temple-portico, which point to a later sixth- or even seventh-century occupation (see Verreyke 2007): post-holes have been located, most probably remnants of wooden beams used to support a wooden roof. The use of less durable building materials like wood or mud-brick between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages is now widely attested within Italian cities (Brogiolo 1999, 110; Christie 2006, 194–8). However, in our case study, these wooden structures probably relate to an occupation phase following the end of the urban centre (Vermeulen and Verreyke, forthcoming). In other words, it is possible to claim

some scattered occupation in *Potentia* during the period of Lombard dominance, but without clear or organised character.

Nucleated settlements now lay elsewhere on hilltops: in our study area, the sites of later towns such as Potenza Picena (Monte Santo) to the south, Recanati to the west and Loreto to the north immediately spring to mind. The ruins of *Potentia* were possibly long part of the landscape, but there is not much hard evidence to precisely date the phases of dismantling the former city. During the 2007–10 excavations at the West Gate we could observe the extreme thoroughness of the despoliation or robbing. The whole excavated stretch of the town wall was exhumed, perhaps already in early medieval times, and an undated lime kiln positioned on the systematically destroyed curtain wall area, shows that much processing of *spolia* was done *in situ* during a second phase. Recent (2010) geophysical evidence in that same area of the west wall indicates the existence of a whole battery of such lime kilns. We know from documentary evidence that with the construction of the Castello Svevo (Porto Recanati), in the course of the thirteenth century and the subsequent construction of the nearby town, building materials from *Potentia* – a veritable open quarry – were still being systematically re-used, while marble was burnt down for the production of lime (Alfieri 1947, 11).

But the most important factor in the unimpressive afterlife of the site of *Potentia* and in its early dismantlement could be connected with a notable monastic presence in the vicinity: Santa Maria in Potenza, located just south of *Potentia* at the former Roman bridge over the Potenza, can only be traced back to textual evidence of AD 1030, but the first clear reference to the Santa Maria al ponte di Potenza dates from 1184, when the ‘Ordine Crociferi’ settled here (Allevi 1992, 249–50). Nevertheless, we cannot exclude that there is a much closer temporal link between the final abandonment of the town site and the erection of this important monastery, with its church less than 1 km away. We might perhaps hypothesise a kind of shifted religious focus, away from the ruinous urban core, that fostered a level of enduring grouped settlement close by. Our still limited data could in fact support a previously controversial view by Ward-Perkins (1984, 51–84) that, throughout the peninsula, these (former) urban locations frequently survived as politico-military, and especially ecclesiastical, foci throughout the troubled fifth to seventh centuries. Their populations were small, and the shape and scale of the settlements after the mid-sixth century can better be described as mere villages, but their role was significant in the later first millennium revival of genuine urban activity in this part of Italy. It must be stressed, however, that this urban revival for *Potentia* did not take place in the

same site, but in a better defensible location nearby. And this is by no means an exceptional situation in this part of Adriatic Italy, since, strikingly, between the sixth and ninth centuries, all of the Potenza valley city sites were eventually abandoned as places for suitable clustered settlement. This was partly conditioned by the fact that the river corridor formed a disputed frontier territory between Lombards and Byzantines, thereby determining a complete reorganisation of the settlement structure between the end of the sixth and the first half of the seventh centuries – changes also demonstrated in the recent rural surveys of the area (Verreyke and Vermeulen 2009; Verdonck and Vermeulen 2004, 220).

Finally, we are also convinced that the specific topographic position of *Potentia* played a role in its decay and eventual total annihilation. A combination of a poor strategic position in the narrow and erosion-sensitive valley floor and an altering situation in the soil hydrology must have been among the most important causes of the diminishing population of some central Adriatic towns in favour of surrounding hilltop sites. Most of the interdisciplinary work by the Ghent team of geomorphologists (directed by M. De Dapper) in the coastal area of the river Potenza concerned the hydrography, the evolution of soil erosion, the alluviation/colluviation history of the area and coastal change. The reconstruction of the physical landscape of these periods is based on remote sensing (satellites, aerial photography), field observations (hand augering, geophysical survey, altimetric survey, etc.), soil sample analysis (OSL dating, mollusc determination) and historic-geographical research (maps, ancient documents). Thanks to this research, fully integrated into the archaeological research agenda, it is now clear that the Roman-period situation of the Potenza river, flowing a few hundred metres south of *Potentia*, and debouching slightly inland of the present coastline, endured until the fourteenth century. The precise location of the Potenza during Roman times is now known, as are the locations of the medieval flood activities that partly destroyed the southern outskirts of the town area together with parts of its immediate hinterland. There are strong indications of the progressive erosion of the hillsides during Roman times and especially lack of attention to the fluvial system from the fifth or sixth century onwards, meaning a failure to remove mud and sands which came to block the mouth of the river and gradually changed the once fertile and well adapted agricultural lower valley into a landscape of marshes and detritic gullies. This hastened and expanded the formation of unhealthy lagoon environments, silently obscuring the ancient port settlements, of which *Potentia* is a good example. In this area, where the town and port structures near the river mouth had been long since in decay, and geopolitical conditions since the Lombard intrusions and

territorial pressures had changed the importance of the connection between interior and coast, there was no need or scope to counter the effect of these dynamics. The result was a much more intensive and rapid change in the coastal landscape, with complete shifts of the river course causing the abandonment of the former bridge and road system. In later medieval times, however, when the new settlement of Porto Recanati started to develop, people began slowly to re-impose their influence over the hydrographic network (Baldetti 1983). Despite this, settlement patterns in this region of central Adriatic Italy did not dramatically change from that which emerged in the early medieval period: even in the much better documented fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the population still continued to concentrate in the already existing habitats on hilltops at some distance from the coastline, while the old coastal settlements were now completely abandoned. The recovery and reclamation of the coastal zones and the re-awakening of port and trade roles only really came about again from the nineteenth century onwards (Staffa 2001), as is indeed evident in the case of the small fishing town of Porto Recanati.

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Chapter 4

After the Rats: Cosa in the Late Empire and Early Middle Ages

Enrico Cirelli and Elizabeth Fentress

Introduction

The fate of the Roman town of Cosa on the coast of Southern Etruria in western central Italy perhaps fits rather strangely in a collection on the ends of ancient cities, largely because its end as a town in any sense can hardly be placed after the third century AD, when a tiny Severan simulacrum of a forum was built on the site of the Augustan forum, with substantial granaries taking the place of houses and a diminutive shrine of Liber as the principal focus of cult; there is a little mithraeum as well under the vaults of the Curia (Fentress 1994; Collins-Clinton 1977). The abandonment of this coastal settlement, which was surely purely administrative, represents the fourth of a series of interruptions which led to the title of the publication of our excavations *An Intermittent Town* (Fentress 2004). The desolate state of the town is noted in the well-known lines of Rutilius Namatianus (*de Reditu suo*, 1.296–7), on his journey up the coast in AD 411 or 412: ‘Then we descry, all unguarded now, desolate Cosa’s ancient ruins and unsightly walls ... The story runs that once upon a time the townsfolk were forced to migrate and left their homes behind because rats infested them!’

We are returning to the subject for two reasons. First, although we do not have new information from the site, it seems appropriate to situate it in the current debate on the model proposed by Francovich and Hodges (2003, 109–10) for the evolution of Tuscan, and indeed Italian, settlement in the Early Middle Ages. According to this model, after the definitive dissolution of the ancient or classical Roman landscape with the abandonment of the villas towards the middle of the sixth century, the new military élites of Italy, both in Byzantine and Lombard territories, gradually deserted their territorial base. In the seventh century nuclear hilltop villages were created by much of the peasant population. Then, between the end of the eighth and the ninth centuries, new rural élites developed, with increasingly hierarchical spaces within the existing villages. Carolingian aristocracies thus converged on the new landscape, further transforming it (*ibid.*, 107–8; see also Brogiolo and Chavarría Arnau

2005, [Chapter 7](#); Valenti 2005, 199–201). Indeed, a long review article by Emanuele Vaccaro (2005) has already questioned our conclusions in the light of this model. A second reason to revisit Cosa is that some of our conclusions have evolved since the 2004 publication, and it is worth reconsidering them in the light of evidence from elsewhere.

It should be noted at the outset that one of the aims of the excavation was to establish whether Cosa had served as a hilltop refuge in the Early Middle Ages: a twelfth-century castle on the site, by then called *Ansedonia*, was known from documents of the abbey of the Tre Fontane in Rome (see Cardarelli 1924–25; Luttrell 2002); further, the legend reported by that abbey that they had received the properties in the *Ager Cosanus* from Charlemagne and Pope Leo III suggested that occupation of this site might have been continuous. A thorough search of the pottery deposits deriving from Frank Brown's excavations (Brown 1980: the excavations took place between 1948 and 1975; an extensive bibliography of the Cosa excavations is found in the related Wikipedia article) and held in the American Academy in Rome seemed to support the idea: although there were no recognisable coarse wares, seven fragments of Forum Ware (or 'ceramica a vetrina pesante') from the Arx (citadel) suggested that occupation there had begun well before the construction of the medieval curtain wall (Hobart 1992, 304). Accordingly, this was the first area to be excavated. Substantial trenches covering some 365 m² explored those parts of the Arx left untouched by Brown. Subsequently, the project examined large areas of the forum and the 'Eastern Height': on the latter over 1,500 m² were excavated. We also conducted a systematic sampling programme in order to establish the latest occupation in each *insula* of the city, specifically intended to determine the limits of any medieval activity here. In fact, none of the sample trenches, with the exception of a single trench near the forum, revealed any such material, meaning that results for the Middle Ages are limited to the main area excavations.

The Late Roman and Byzantine Settlement on the Arx and in the Forum

The first occupation on the site later than the Severan period is a double settlement, whose first element, in the forum area, comprised some sort of housing, bread ovens, and a church built over the old basilica, with, to its north, a small cemetery ([Figure 4.1](#)).

On the Arx were found a granary, stables, and perhaps lodging in the ruins of the *Capitolium*. Dated to the late fifth to early sixth century by the plentiful pottery in the 'Forum Cistern deposit' (see

Fontana 2004, 307–19), as well as by less plentiful finds on the Arx, the latter site was originally interpreted as a state-run *mansio* or road-station, although by the time of the final publication we moved towards Ciampoltrini and Notini's (1993) suggestion that it was a complex that replaced the imperial villa which had once occupied the area of the *Portus Cosanus*. The settlement in the forum was interpreted as having housed the workers on the estate, and the two settlements were linked by a new road, which partially followed the course of the old *cardo maximus* (Fentress 2004, 78). At that time we were unaware of Patitucci's convincing interpretation of the name 'Ansedonia' as deriving from '*sitonia*', or granary (Patitucci 2001, 199, citing Fantasia 2000). This fits well with the evidence from the Arx, and, indeed, with the third-century granaries of the forum (these latter perhaps the temptation for Rutilius Namatianus' cited infestations of rats!). Clearly Cosa/Ansedonia had remained on the Roman administrative books, even though there is little evidence for the period between the third and the late fifth centuries. Like the third-century forum, the Arx would have been an official centre for the collection of grain, either as tax or as the rent of tenants of the imperial estates in the area, or the public lands of the city. From there, it could have been redistributed to any troops in the area – implying thereby a more militarised landscape.

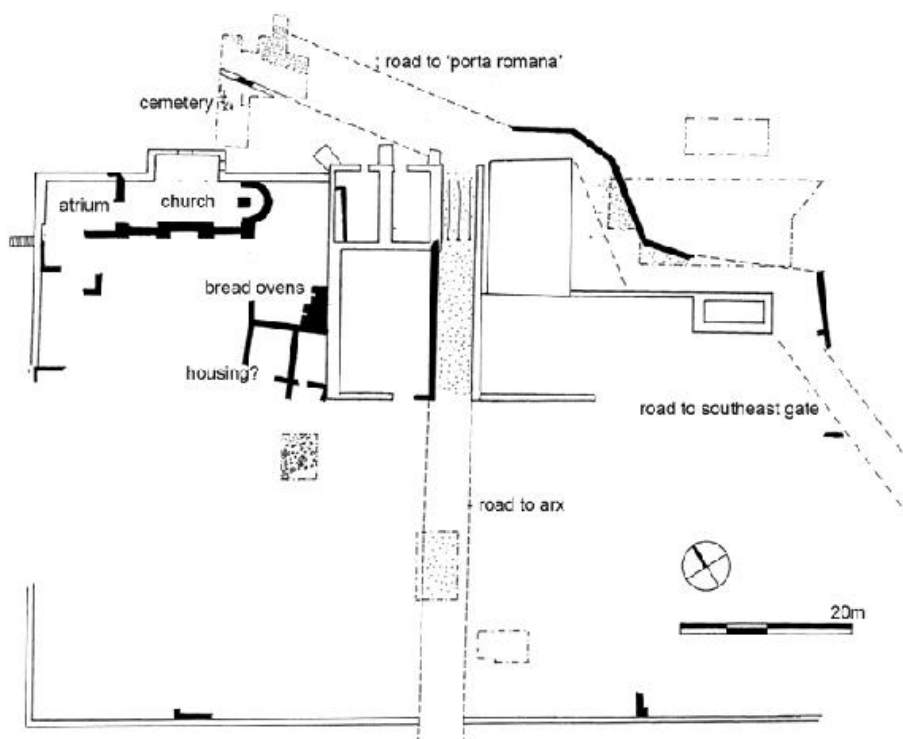


Figure 4.1 Cosa: the forum in the sixth century

A Byzantine *castrum* appears to have fortified the position on the Arx at some point after the burning of the granary (see Figure 4.2). Evidence for this comes from its well-built walls, with ashlar facing and a rubble core, as well as from a Latin inscription that appears to refer to a *Neapolis*, written with clearly sixth-century letter forms (Fentress 2004, 80–86) (see Figure 4.3).

A double-armed fibula of apparently military type forms part of the exiguous finds of this period from the Arx (*ibid.*, 242; note also here an annular brooch of fifth- to seventh-century date). There is no evidence for occupation of the site after the beginning of the seventh century: a sherd of African Red Slip ware Hayes form 105d and an amphora of Keay LXII are the latest pottery finds from this phase of the Arx (Fentress et al. 1991, 216, fig.17.2), whereas at other sites on the south Tuscan coast Hayes forms go up to 109 and to the end of the century, even if they are extremely rare (Emanuele Vaccaro, pers. comm. on finds at the port dump of *Portus Scabris* or Puntone di Scarlino, Grosseto; Vaccaro 2011). In the Cosa forum, the cistern deposit closed around the third quarter of the sixth century, and there is no other sixth-century material in the area (though see claim in Vaccaro 2005, n.5). Sergio Fontana's (2004) reexamination of the pottery from the cistern, originally published as fourth-century, identified two sherds of ARS forms Hayes 91C, two cups of Hayes 99A, and a few sherds of Hayes 88. Hayes forms 103D and 104, both produced in D2, and North African cylindrical amphorae such as Bonifay 43 (Keay LVII) datable to the mid-sixth century and produced in the kilns of Beni Khlar-Sidi Zahruni in the territory of Nabeul, are one of the most common forms found in the sixth-century Mediterranean (Bonifay 2004, 135–6). Other imported forms include amphorae from the eastern Mediterranean such as the LRA 1, produced in Cilicia (Ferrazzoli and Ricci 2007, 673). Cooking wares come from Pantelleria and Sardinia (*ibid.*, 319), while some forms in *pietra ollare* certainly came from Liguria (Fontana 2004, 319; Fentress et al. 1991, 216). From other areas of the Byzantine settlement at Cosa come *TS grise* sherds from Narbonensis (*ibid.*, 209); relatively rare in Tyrrhenian Central Italy, a few of these have been found at nearby Talmonaccio (Von Vacano 1980), while others are known from Corsica (Jodin 1971, 60), Ventimiglia, Sardinia, and Elba (Rigoir 1998, 104), as well as from Rome itself (Whitehouse et al. 1982, 66).

All of these could be attributed to state distribution rather than to commerce; a strikingly similar context exists at the fortress site of S. Antonino di Perti in Liguria to the north (Murialdo 2001). However, Fontana underlines the importance of a few transport amphorae produced in Southern Italy and Tuscany, particularly two 'Cosan'

amphorae which demonstrate a local wine production, probably commercial – their absence in other contexts should signify that they were not more widely distributed (2004, 311–12, figs. 141.2–3).

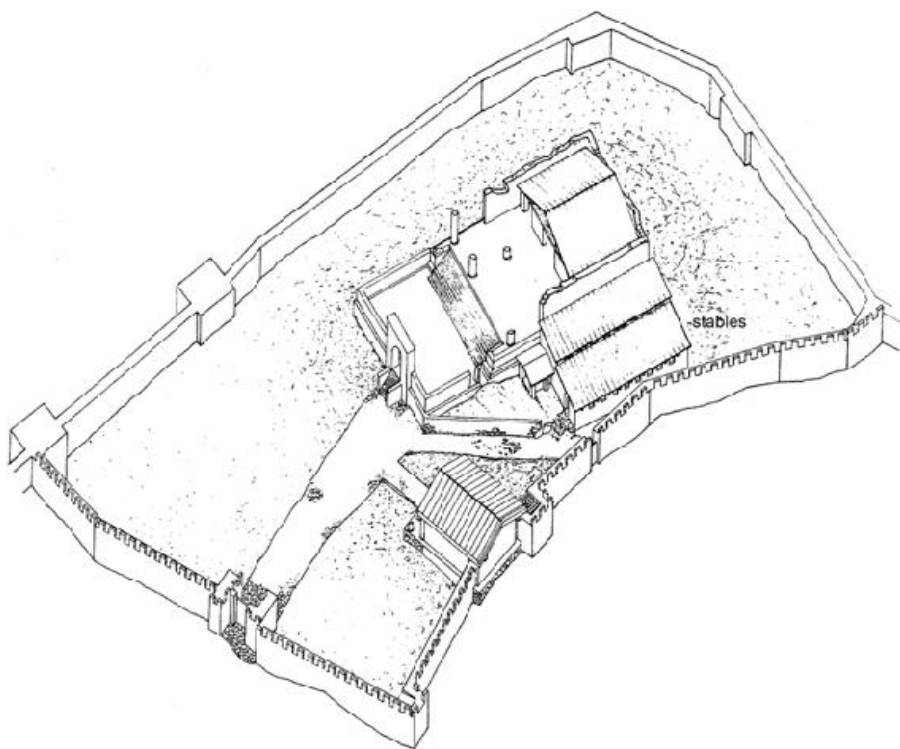


Figure 4.2 *The Byzantine castrum on the Arx of Cosa, reconstruction (Drawing by Andrew Wixom)*



Figure 4.3 The inscription C67.283; AE 2004

After the Fort: Early Medieval and Medieval Presences

None of this ceramic material can be dated later than the beginning of the seventh century, and thus we date the abandonment of the site from this point. But this, of course, is precisely the point that Vaccaro contests: he argues that the sunken-floored buildings found in the forum area and on the Eastern Height must belong to the seventh century on the basis firstly that that building typology is unknown in Italy at later dates, and, secondly, because the pattern of precocious occupation of heights which were later used by castles is, on the Hodges and Francovich model, standard for Tuscany.

The Cosan sunken-floored buildings, or *Grubenhäuser*, are sub-rectangular structures, cut into the earth with no trace of flooring, and with some postholes around the outside of the walls. On the Eastern Height, one excavated example was packed with large stones, perhaps collapsed from the walls. Another was a long rectangle with some postholes around it; a hollow in the bedrock might indicate a central

post (Fentress 2004, 111, fig.37) (see [Figure 4.4](#)).

Near the forum, cut 60 cm deep into the ruins of the House of Diana, was found a more substantial structure, measuring 4 x 4.5 m (ibid., 109–10). Nearby was another structure, at 1.5 x 4 m seemingly far too small for human habitation and probably used as an animal pen. A further structure appears to have been rather larger, but was only partially excavated (see [Figure 4.5](#)): this had a peripheral ditch with square post-voids along its inner edge, suggesting timbers squared with an adze, and similar to one in the early medieval fortified village of Miranduolo, in a context dating to c. AD 1000 (Valenti 2004, 30; 2008, 9). It might have been the principal building in the area: however, no pottery was found in the trench.

In the area of the House of Diana the Roman destruction layers had been subject to large, square cuts, just avoiding the walls of the rooms. Within the cuts, the layers were churned, and mixed with a certain amount of soil. These seem to have been hoe cultivation patches, which could have exploited the access to the cistern provided by the *impluvium* in the atrium of the House of Diana; a shallow ditch ran towards the *impluvium*, evidently channelling water into it. The evidence from the forum thus points to peasant dwellings, with cultivation in its immediate area, and perhaps some animal husbandry (the little sunken-floored building perhaps serving for a pig or chickens) ([Figure 4.6](#)).

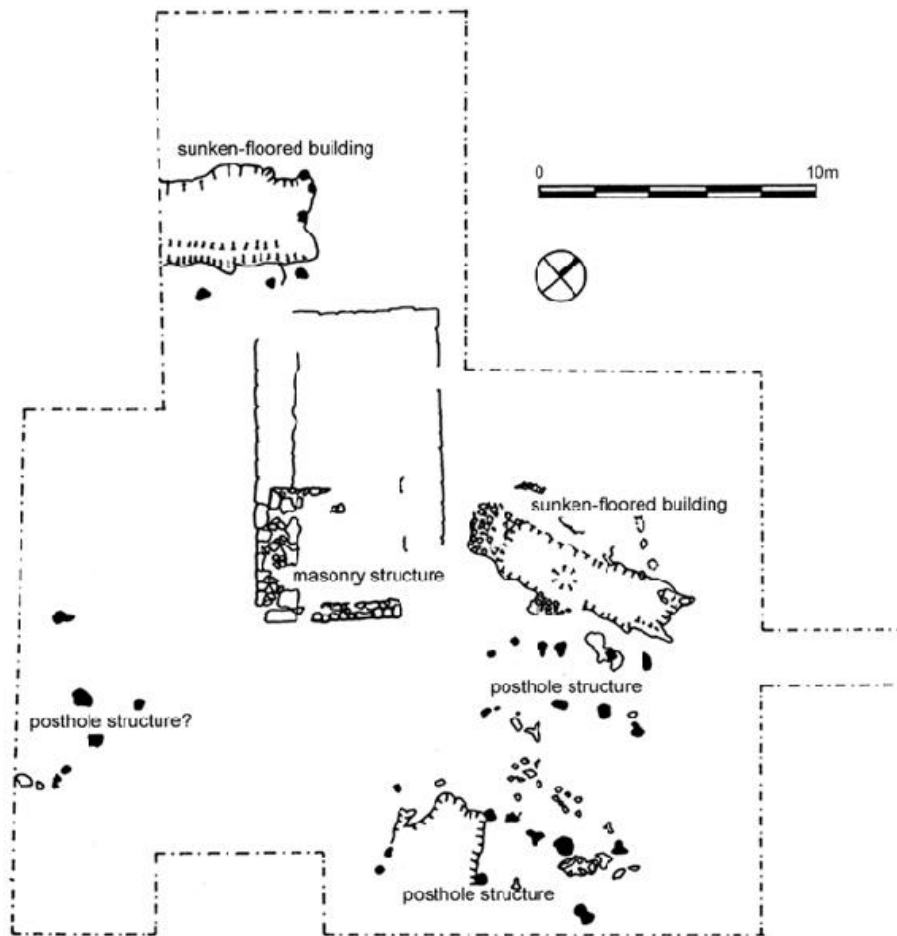


Figure 4.4 *Cosa: the Eastern Height in the tenth century*

None of these buildings contained occupation deposits, although some pottery from the one in the forum was found in the cistern of the House of Diana, and a few fragments of tenth-century pottery in the fill of the rainwater ditch. However, Vaccaro's contention that the building type itself is sufficient to date them to the seventh century does not stand up to closer examination. Sunken-floored buildings have in recent years been found in many parts of Italy, and indeed in most of Europe, with varying chronologies, and it is by now certain that this type of structure is not characteristic of any given period, nor a phenomenon of cultural tradition by Germanic populations alone (See now Fronza 2011). Those found by Paul Arthur (1999, 171–8; 2004, 117) in Apulia, which are dated to the seventh and eighth centuries by radiocarbon (AD 530–660; 650–780), can hardly have been Germanic in origin. Other contexts where a Germanic presence can be excluded include Classe (Ravenna), where numerous sunken-

floored buildings have been found within the huge late Roman warehouse complex, cut into the destruction deposits at the beginning of the eighth century (Augenti et al. 2009); these were used for both granaries and dwellings, with possible other uses such as sheds and seasonal shelters (Augenti et al. 2006). Other *Grubenhäuser* have been found in eighth- to ninth-century contexts at Rocchette Pannocchieschi, in the territory of Massa Marittima, where a probable house is dated between the ninth and the early tenth; a nearby oval structure with a diameter of around 2.0 m was identified as a shed relating to a nearby forge for iron working (Valenti 2004, 62–3). A sunken-floored building found at the coastal site of Donoratico – a site which, like Cosa, was abandoned after the sixth century – seems to have formed part of a *curtis* or manorial estate occupied from the eighth century (Bianchi 2004, 9–12).

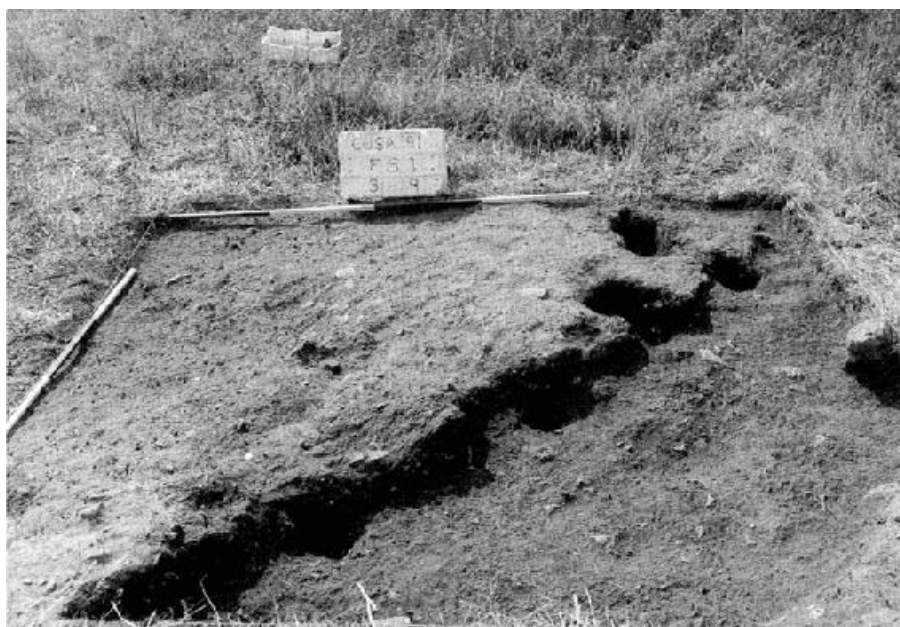


Figure 4.5 Post-trench excavated in one of the sample trenches

Outside of Italy these structures are well known in late Saxon, Carolingian and Viking contexts dating from the end of the third century through the tenth – i.e. not only in the Migration Period (Jones and Jones 1975, 138–87; Hamerow 1993; 2002, 31–2; van Zeist and Palfenier-Vegter 1979, 271; Powlesland 1997, 106). In Bulgaria and Romania they are ubiquitous in all periods, as they are standard in all ‘Slavic’ cultural areas – a key urban context is royal Pliska, with examples running fully into the eleventh century (Henning 2007; earlier example at *Nicopolis ad Istrum*: Poulter 1995, 168–74, fig.65; for Avar Hungary: *Hungarian Archaeology* 2003, 307,

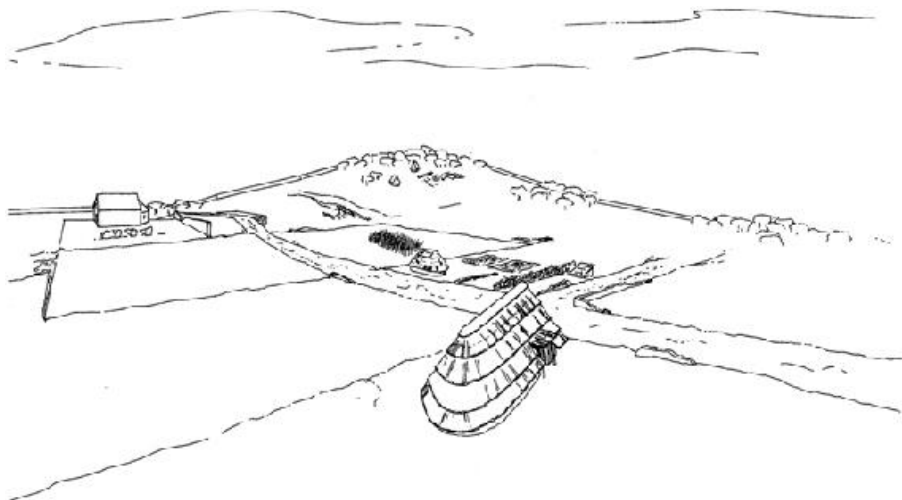


Figure 4.6 *Reconstruction of settlement on the hill of Ansedonia in the tenth century, looking towards the Eastern Height (Drawing by Andrew Wixom)*

In sum, we do not need to attribute the diffusion of *Grubenhäuser* to Germanic practice, but rather to a building habit diffused throughout Europe from the late antique period, spread perhaps by the multiple migrations taking place at that time or by integration of different cultural groups in Byzantine and other armies (Farnoux 1987, 35). Although there is little to connect the sunken-floored buildings to Roman building practice, we cannot link them to any specific ‘invasion’, much less to a uniform Lombard influence. But, above all, although we regard them as post-dating the sixth century, they could come from any century after that, into the tenth at least.

It should be added that Cosa’s sunken-floored buildings were in fact originally published as belonging to the seventh century, for exactly the same reasons: our preconceptions (Celuzza and Fentress 1994) were the same as those of Vaccaro. The building type seemed to date itself, and the rarity of the pottery, which had not yet been studied, led us to privilege this evidence. However, the circularity of this reasoning is evident at a glance. Sunken-floored buildings are hardly exclusive to one century elsewhere, and, even if all other such structures are securely dated by pottery (which is not necessarily the case) or by radiocarbon (which is even rarer), we would still need some independent dating for our own examples. On the Eastern Height, it is uncertain whether the sunken-floored buildings pre-date the ditched fortification that surrounds the hill, linked to the Roman city walls. These fortifications consist of two parallel ditches, which

bar off a corner of the Roman town, joining up with the city walls. Below the point of intersection the walls are broken, probably in order to prevent attackers using them as a way into the fortified settlement. Higher up the hill was an inner ditch. The earliest fill of that ditch is dated by sherds of sparse glazed wares to the eleventh century, and another piece of sparse glazed pottery was found in the destruction layers of one of the sunken-floored buildings. No earlier pottery was found on the Eastern Height, so it seems fair to assume that the first occupation was no earlier than the tenth century.

Evidence for the date of the little settlement on the forum comes from related cultivation deposits, the fill of the little ditch running into the cistern, and the cistern itself. Within the cistern were found a human femur that had received a blow at the hip with a sharp object: lack of traces of healing suggest that this blow, or another contemporary with it, was fatal. Although the rest of the skeleton was not found we can assume that the body had been thrown into the cistern by an unknown enemy with the intent of fouling the water supply. Other such skeletons were in fact recovered in the past from other Cosan cisterns (but never published at all). The femur was dated by radiocarbon to 1031-1155 cal. AD (68% probability) cal. (. BGS 211, , 940 ± 55 BP, Fentress 2003, 95).

These buildings represent the sum total of the evidence for the reoccupation of the hill. The only exception to this statement is the Forum Ware found by Brown on the Arx, which must date between the end of the ninth and earlier tenth century (Hobart 1992, 304–9; Cirelli and Hobart 2004, 321). However, there is no context for it, and no structures that relate to it, unless we count the little church with a cemetery on the site (excavated between 1965 and 1973 by Russell Scott) from whose neighbourhood derive coins of the tenth and eleventh centuries (Fentress 2003, 107–8; coins in Buttrey 1980, no.366 (AD 962–973) and no.368 (AD 1056–1106)). This, then, would be the earliest date at which we might suspect a nucleated settlement on the hill of Cosa, built into the ruins of the Byzantine settlement on the Arx, and the sunken-floored buildings may well date from the same period. However, such a church, perhaps a *pieve* or parish church, might have existed there without any attendant settlement, gathering the faithful from farms in the surrounding area. There is certainly not enough early pottery to support the idea of a substantial early medieval occupation, nor have any other traces of medieval buildings been identified on the Arx, if we exclude the late medieval circuit wall which was apparently never completed before the abandonment of the site in 1329 (Fentress 2003, 132).

Finally, the charge that a seventh- to ninth-century settlement was there and that we failed to recognise it can be answered with some

negative evidence. During the Albegna Valley Survey (Carandini et al. 2002), sherds of small globular jugs with fine strap handles and undefined rims were recovered from a number of very small sites. The fabric has a pinky-buff finish with a distinctive pale-grey break. We surmised at the time that the sites were seventh century, as the pottery was occasionally found on the very last of the Roman villas in the area (map at Fentress 2003, fig.30, and Fentress and Wickham 2002). More recently, Vaccaro himself surveyed and subsequently excavated a large open site in the valley of the Ombrone, Podere Serratone, with plentiful sherds of the same pottery, which he refers to as ‘anima grigia’ (Campana et al. 2005, 474–5; Vaccaro 2011). Examination of this material by Fentress in 2006 confirmed that it matches the pottery found in the Albegna Valley Survey. Vaccaro even suggests that Podere Serratone was one of its centres of production. Thermoluminescence dates them to the eighth or early ninth century. This fabric, which we were very interested in, was never found either in our excavations or in the thorough examination of the deposits of the Academy. This absence of evidence comes strikingly close to evidence of absence. It seems to rule out any seventh- or eighth-century occupation of the site, however improbable that seems to proponents of the Francovich and Hodges model (2003) for the occupation of Tuscan hilltops.

On the contrary, Vaccaro’s new evidence confirms a view that we have argued elsewhere: namely that open settlement had not died out altogether in coastal Tuscany during the seventh and eighth centuries (Fentress and Wickham 2002). His own site is larger than most of those found in the Albegna valley, which are generally tiny settlements with scatters around 5 x 5 m, although a few larger ones were observed (e.g. SD 43, the only such site on a hilltop). The little sites show no clear relationship to any earlier settlements, and are not found in particularly defended positions. Indeed, they seem to represent a capillary exploitation of the best of the available farming land. Dispersed occupation – whether stable or seasonal – must thus also find a place in the model. Indeed, the *curtes* of Tocciano and Lusciano mentioned in documents of the eighth and ninth centuries seem to refer to open sites. The passage from the remains of late antique settlement, consisting almost exclusively of villas, to the ‘incastellated’ settlement of the eleventh and twelfth centuries was thus not a uniform process in the coastal area.

Conclusion

We have spent much of this paper attempting to prove a negative, namely that there was no occupation on the hill of Cosa between the

seventh and the tenth centuries. Future excavations may give this the lie, but for the moment the evidence points in that direction. Why does it matter?

It is perhaps not surprising that continuity is the default setting for archaeological sites. The end of the ancient city, when confirmed, continues to strike us as bizarre and somehow unnatural: what, all those good buildings, all that beautifully cut stone, those marvellous defensive walls – surely settlement ought to have continued there? Cosa's combination of a fine defensive setting commanding two ports and a rich hinterland, on a fortified hill that controls communications along the coast on the *Via Aurelia*, would seem to have made its continuous occupation a given: only its lack of fresh water renders it less than optimal from the point of view of location analysis. Indeed, the periodic attempts to reoccupy it – for administrative purposes in the Severan period and the late fifth century, and military in the sixth – are clearly functions of its apparent suitability for settlement. And yet its role as the central place for the area between the Albegna and the Fiora was never contested. Orbetello, just to the north, protected by the fishy waters of its lagoon, was certainly occupied in the late Etruscan period (Saggin 2003) and, as von Falkenhausen (2003) has shown, was occupied again in the seventh century AD, when a long Greek inscription was cut for the *consiliarius* Sergius and his wife, their son Anastasius, a *scrinarius*, and his wife, and grandson Mamalos with his wife; the inscription was dedicated by Moscos, an archdeacon. Following Cosentino's (1996, 511–16) identification of Moscos as archdeacon of the Church of Rome under Pope Gregory III, mentioned in a synodal decree published in 732, von Falkenhausen suggested that the territory of the *Ager Cosanus* had been given by the Lombard king Liutprand to the abbey of S. Anastasio *Ad Aquas Salvias*, and that the family had transferred to the site of Orbetello to administer the territory. This move would have signified the creation of a new northern frontier for Roman jurisdiction, some 70 km to the north of Civitavecchia, the northernmost outpost of Rome in the early eighth century. Subsequent settlement of the hill of Ansedonia may have played a role in this frontier, which remained in dispute for many centuries, extending even into the fifteenth (Luttrell 2002).

One explanation for this preference for Orbetello in the post-antique period must be its real immunity from Arab raids on the coast: a lookout on Monte Argentario could signal any danger to the settlement from the sea; invaders would have had to land on the outer sand spits, or tombolas, and then move inland to approach the town from the narrow and easily fortified peninsula. (It is not perhaps a chance that one version of the Carolingian legend about Cosa has it occupied by Saracens, a tradition reflected in the fresco at S. Anastasio

Ad Aquas Salvias where they are represented as naked devils). Orbetello was safer than any defended hilltop.

What is striking, however, is that, as Cardarelli (1925) has shown, the territory of the ancient town remained stable. It was argued in *Cosa V* that this implies an archival memory preserved in Rome, as reflected in the references to Ansedonia as a *civitas* in the twelfth-century privileges confirming the possessions of Saint Anastasius. This suggests that its status, as well as its boundaries, was retained in documents, for certainly no post-Byzantine settlement bore the slightest resemblance to a town. The ancient city, then, ‘ended’ in fact while continuing in the archives. It may not have been the only settlement in Italy where such a confusion existed.

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Chapter 5

Urban Change on the Balearics in Late Antiquity

Miguel Ángel Cau

Introduction

The Balearic Islands (see [Figure 5.1](#)) lie in a strategic position for navigation and trade routes in the western Mediterranean, as recognised very early on by the ancient populations of the Mediterranean Sea. Greek and Roman writers were fully aware of the archipelago and they separate this into two groups of islands: firstly, Mallorca (*Kromyoussa/Baliaris Maior/Maiorica*) and Menorca (*Meloussa/Baliaris Minor/Minorica*) formed the *Gymnesia, Baliares*, or *Baliarides*; and secondly, Ibiza (*Ebusus*) and Formentera (*Ophiusa/Colubraria*) were considered the *Pityussae* (see Blanes et al. 1990; Zucca 1998; 2005; García Riaza and Sánchez León 2000; Sánchez León and García Riaza 2004; Guerrero 2004). These two groups of islands had substantial differences: the *Baliares* had a strong Iron Age indigenous background represented by the Talayotic, a culture famous for its slingers who were enrolled in Punic and Roman armies, but with a relatively poorly developed urbanism distinguished by cyclopean construction works; in contrast, the *Pityussae*, with Ebusus as the main city of the sub-archipelago, had a strong Phoenician-Punic character (Orfila 2005, 27–8). In 123 BC, Roman military actions led by Q. Cecilius Metellus to conquer the *Baliares* did not affect the *Pityussae* as Ebusus was already a *foederata* of Rome (see García Riaza 1999). Subsequently, however, both groups of islands saw urban and commercial take-off, with the latter in turn aiding the rapid growth of the larger centres.

It is not my intention to deal in detail with either the juridical status of the Balearic Islands or the processes of municipalisation here, since these aspects have been sufficiently discussed elsewhere (NB Arribas 1983c; Zucca 1998; García Riaza and Sánchez León 2000; García Riaza 2003; Sánchez León and García Riaza 2004; various works by Sánchez León 1999–2003); but comment is needed on the settings and quality of these sites in the full imperial period before consideration is given to the fates and archaeologies of these in the late antique and early medieval epochs.

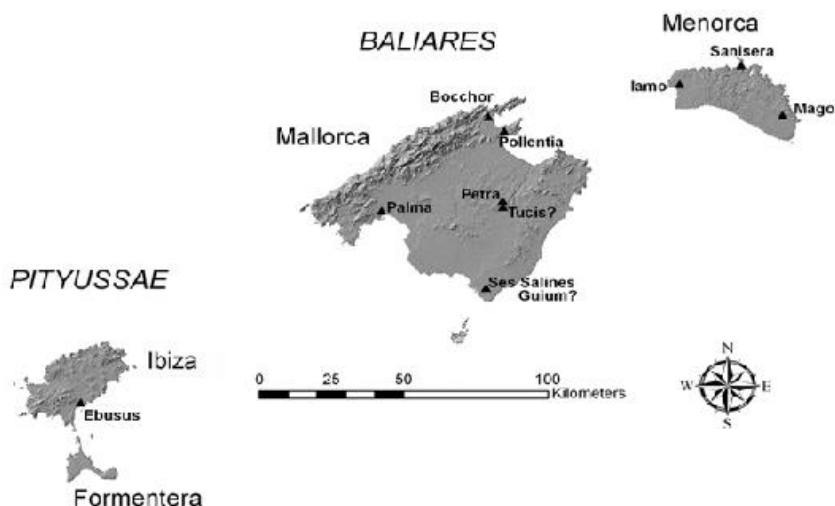


Figure 5.1 Map of the Balearic Islands with the ancient cities and the main places cited within the text

The written sources are short but quite explicit regarding the urban phenomenon on the islands in the Roman period. For Mallorca, Pliny (*Nat. Hist.*, III, 77) offers information on the cities of *Palma* and *Pollentia*, while also presenting evidence of the existence of *Bocchor* as *foederata* (this site located a few kilometres from *Pollentia*) and *Guium* and *Tucis*, corresponding probably to some indigenous sites of *ius latii*. The status of *Palma* and *Pollentia* has always been controversial because Strabo (*Geographia*, III.5, 1) refers to them as *póleis*, Pliny as *oppida civium romanorum*, and Mela (*Chorographia*, 2, 124) as *coloniae*. The most widely accepted argument is that these two nuclei were first *castella* or forts linked to Rome's early military conquest and were then re-founded as *coloniae* after the Sertorian wars (García Ríaza and Sánchez León 2000, 64–7). Zucca (1998, 153–4) proposed that *Guium* could be located in the area of Ses Salines in the south of the island

given the presence here of important Roman findings and the necropolis of Sa Carrotja (Orfila 1988). However, there is no epigraphic confirmation for this hypothesis. For *Tucis*, the existence of the medieval place name *Tuca* is viewed by many scholars as a survival of the ancient city in the area of Petra (Barceló 1981; Rosselló 2007, 176). An inscription found in this area is dedicated to Pompeia Falconilla, a member of an important senatorial family, and it has been proposed that the inscription could bear the name of *Tucis* (Vený 1965, 73–4; Zucca 1998, 154–5, 243–58; Castelló 2005).

For Menorca, the extant ancient sources use different terms for the urban phenomenon (García Riaza and Sánchez León 2000; Orfila and Riera i Rullan 2004): Mela (*Chorographia* II, 124) refers to *Mago* and *Iamo* as *castella*; Pliny (*Nat.Hist.* III, 78) uses the term *civitates* for these cities including also *Sanisera*; in the second century AD, Ptolemy mentions *Iamna* and *Mago* as *póleis* (*Geografia* II 6, 73); and in the third century, the *Liber generationis Hyppolyti* refers to *Thomaene* and *Magone* as *civitates*. Epigraphy also assists, with recent re-analysis indicating these two were *stipendiariae* with no privileged rank following the conquest (Vený 1965; García Riaza and Sánchez León 2000). The concession of the *ius latii* by the emperor Vespasian around AD 73 transformed at least *Mago* and *Iamo* into *municipii latii*, as corroborated by the epigraphic evidence.

Finally, for Ibiza (*Ebusus*) under Roman rule, very few documentary guides exist: Pliny implies that the city was *foederata* in his day, whereas for the second century AD an inscription names it as *municipium Flavium* (Sánchez León 1999b; 2002–03; Ramon 2004).

During the Roman period, the islands were first part of the *Hispania Citerior* province and with the reforms of Augustus, they became part of *Tarraconensis*, achieving a status of independent province only around the last third of the fourth century (Amengual 1991–92; García Riaza and Sánchez León 2000, 29–31). The Encyclical from Bishop Severus of Menorca, dated AD 418, elucidates some aspects regarding the cities of *Magona* and *Iamona* and their Jewish and Christian populations (Amengual 1991–92; 2008; Sastre 2000). In the early fifth century AD, the letters of Consentius indicate how the island of Menorca was well connected with neighbouring Mallorca, and with Gaul, Africa and the Iberian Peninsula (see Amengual 1991–92; Orfila and Cau 1994). Also during the fifth century, the *Chronicon* of Hydatius reports a Vandal raid against the islands in 425 and their effective conquest in 455. From Procopius of Caesarea's *Bello Vandalico*, we know that in 534 the general Belisarius ordered Apollinarius to conquer the islands for the Byzantine Empire, as part of efforts to reclaim all the Vandal territories. In sum, the written sources from this period are brief and normally refer only broadly to

the islands; furthermore they provide minimal, if any, information related to the actual populations and the cities (Amengual 1991–92).

Along with such restricted documentary support, the lack of extant, clear material and structural guides means that little is known about the topography of the cities of the Balearics in Late Antiquity. The reason is clear: only two of the centres mentioned by the classical sources, *Pollentia* (Alcudia, Mallorca) and *Sanisera* (Sa Nitja, Menorca), are being systematically investigated archaeologically. The other cities, such as *Palma* (Palma de Mallorca, Mallorca), *Magona* (Mahón, Menorca), *Iamo* (Ciutadella, Menorca), and *Ebusus* (Ibiza) are buried under modern urban conglomerations and, therefore, research is very much a subsidiary of rescue excavations normally motivated by modern town planning and development with all the problems that this may imply. *Pollentia* alone offers enough data and thereby scope to start to piece together an image of the town plan, its monuments and its evolution; data are perhaps strongest for the late Republican and earlier imperial periods with interesting results regarding the organisation and the design of the first city (Orfila and Moranta 2001; Moranta and Orfila 2002; Orfila et al. 2004).

The aim of this paper is to provide a first synthesis of the archaeological data that are available regarding these cities during Late Antiquity in the archipelago. A synthetic review is provided, but more emphasis has been given to the city of *Pollentia* in Mallorca since, as noted, this is the only city of the Balearics with a developed enough archaeology to explore in tentative fashion the urban transformations that occurred. I will ask also how far these sites survived or were lost after Late Antiquity. What have previous scholars claimed regarding the fate of these urban (and rural) seats? Is the new archaeological work revising and refining old images of loss and discontinuity on the islands? Was there an Arab redefinition of these sites or a total dislocation of administration and population? First, however, I will outline the nature of earlier archaeological explorations on the Balearics, highlighting evolving research emphases and thereby frame the scope and aims of the current research work.

Pollentia* and *Palma*: Two Cities in the *Balearis Maior

Pollentia

Ancient *Pollentia* occupies the isthmus that separates the bays of Alcudia and Pollença (see [Figure 5.1](#)), at a strategic position in the north-eastern part of Mallorca. Excavations initiated in the early twentieth century uncovered the remains of several buildings,

including residential quarters, part of the forum area, a theatre, industrial areas, and several early and late Roman burial grounds (Arribas et al. 1973; 1978; Arribas 1978; Arribas and Tarradell 1987; Orfila et al. 2000; Orfila et al. 1999; Equip d'Excavacions de Pollentia 1994a and 1994b; Orfila 2000; Cau and Chávez 2003; Orfila et al. 2005; Doenges 2005) (see [Figure 5.2](#)).

The city overlay, at least in some sectors, an earlier indigenous settlement, best recognised in the lower levels of the excavations of the porticoed street of Sa Portella (Arribas et al. 1973). The Roman foundation levels are dated to around 70 BC – suggesting the site's re-foundation as a colony after the Sertorian War, but with a first (unidentified archaeologically) phase as a military *castellum*. Finds and structures signify a likely period of Augustan monumentalisation, some early imperial modifications, followed by notable transformations in the later third century, when fire destroyed parts of the city – a destruction fitting in with the wider turmoils of the Roman West – as documented in older excavation campaigns and in many of the sectors explored more recently, such as the 'House of Polymnia', Ca'n Basser, and the forum, where, in the so-called Room Z, for example, the fire was closely dated to AD 270–280 (Arribas et al. 1973; Orfila et al. 1999; Equip d'Excavacions de Pollentia, 1994b, 142).

But prior to these losses, in the late second or early third century, we can chart the first sizeable transformations that presage the late Roman image of this provincial city (Orfila 2000, 150; 2007, 95). This transformation can be clearly seen in the forum area (see [Figure 5.3](#)) where the porticoed street was shut off though the construction of walls between the columns, creating far less of an open 'arena' to the zone.

Transformations affected also other areas, notably in the '*Insula of Tabernae*' immediately to the west of the forum, where many of the *tabernae* (shops) underwent structural changes prior to AD 280, especially in Rooms V, Y, X, U1, U2, Q, T, and R and part of the West Street (excavated by Dartmouth College); some of the new walls in Rooms R and U were constructed reusing blocks from other buildings, implying demolition of other nearby built units (Doenges 2005, 48) (see [Figure 5.4](#)).

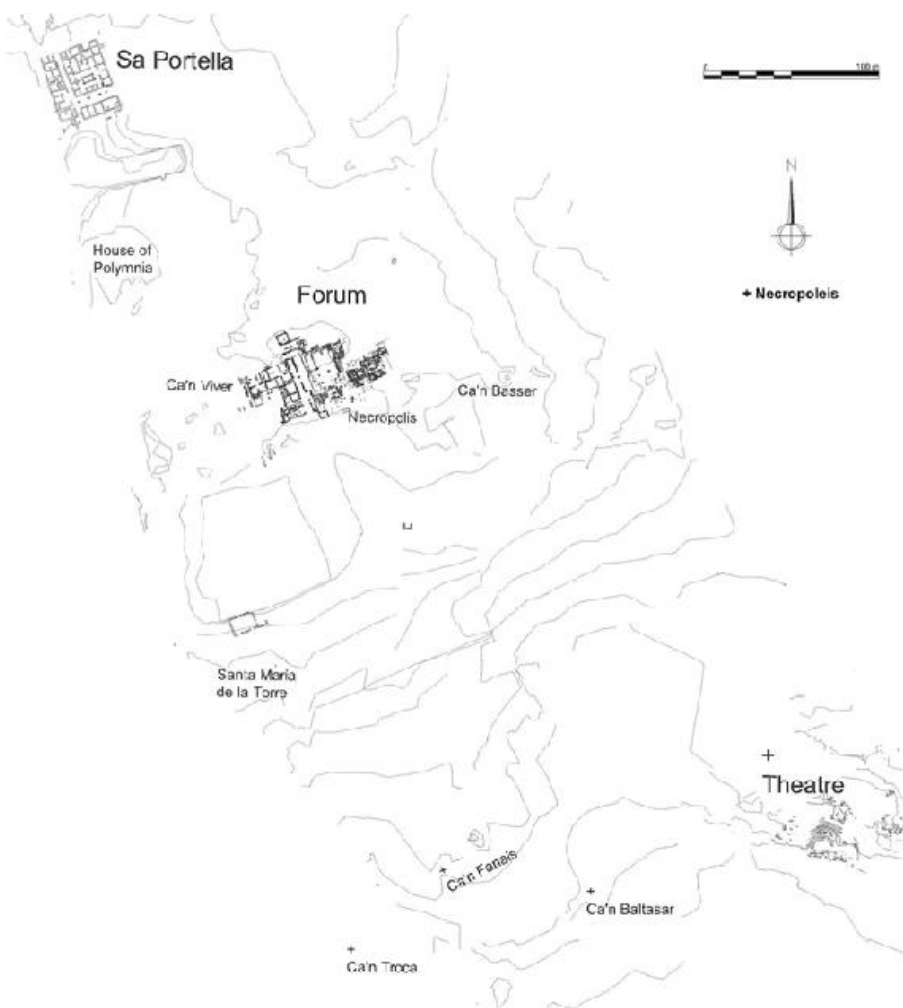


Figure 5.2 *General schematic plan of Pollentia (Alcudia, Mallorca) with the different sectors cited within the text*

More recent excavations in Room A, where both north and west walls were built over Republican-period walls, revealed a southward relocation of the south wall to define a larger internal space entered from a 2.60 m wide entrance. Room B, by contrast, saw a reduction in its interior and a wall closed the access from the west, and in Room Z, the south and east walls were rebuilt, a small buttress put in the inner part of the south-west corner, and a new entrance opened in the northeast; outside Room Z, the blocking by walls of the portico and a new pebble floor for the West Street were documented, also belonging to the third century (Orfila 2000, 151; 2007, 122). What did these changes signify? Smaller mercantile units, property changes, or perhaps the creation of a more enclosed *macellum*?

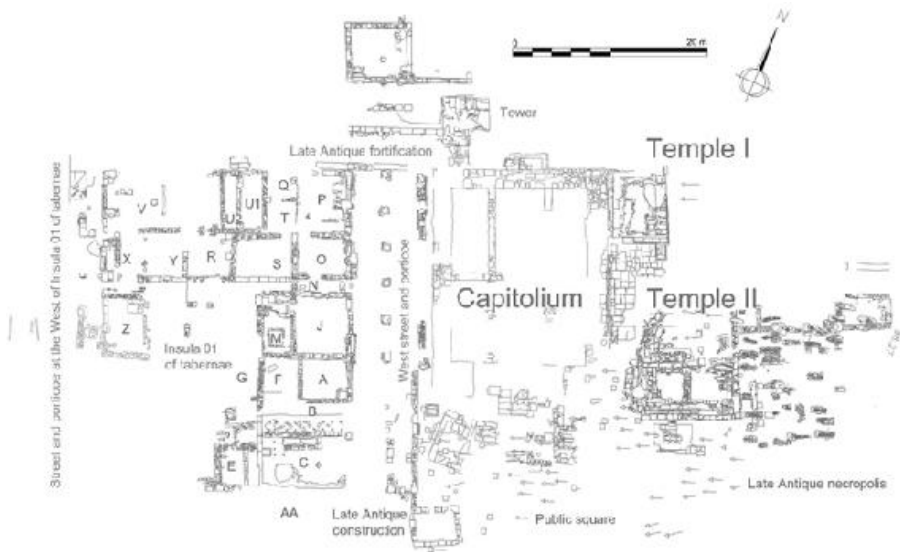


Figure 5.3 Plan of the forum of Pollentia

Interpretations differ. For the American team, the date of these transformations is fixed to the mid-third century and they are viewed as indicating that ‘the center of Pollentia had begun to decay, perhaps as a sharp decline in population. Economic activity may have ceased in the *tabernae* along the west side of the Forum. The shops were occupied by squatters, and rough rooms were built along the portico in front of the shops’ (Doenges 2005, 49). A more positive view was provided by the Spanish team, who suggested that the transformations perhaps began earlier than the third century and in fact represent evidence of intense activity, with continued and varied economic transactions in the *tabernae*, as demonstrated by the great quantity of artefacts found in the overlying later third-century destruction levels (Orfila 2007; Cau and Chávez 2003). Destruction by fire certainly subsequently affected the forum and other parts of the city, including the ‘House of Polymnia’ and the industrial area of Ca’n Bassar (see [Figure 5.2](#)), where there is little evidence of coherent activity beyond the third century.



Figure 5.4

From evidence in the residential neighbourhood of Sa Portella, the construction of a city wall can be dated to this period of upheaval. This wall's line certainly impacted on the so-called 'North-West House', thereby implying a reduction of the city's space and a reorganisation of the area. Perhaps the reorganisation of this residential quarter of the city's northern zone created a sort of 'suburb' or reduced area where the population concentrated. The defensive curtain wall, whose western course only is currently known, was built with two wall faces and a rubble core. Excavation of this core and material from the rooms of the 'North-West House' suggest a third-century AD date (Arribas 1978, 282–4; Tarradell 1978, 343). More recently, Mattingly (2005, 60) has argued that the circuit wall should be dated to around the reign of Probus (the AE 4 coin of Theodosius I (379–395) found in one of the excavations of the wall core (Mattingly 1983, 272) could relate to a later repair work).

Despite the fire, the presence of the wall and other evidence shows the city revived in some fashion, although it is difficult to evaluate the nature of this occupation and the later spatial topography of *Pollentia* (Orfila et al. 2000; Riera i Rullan et al. 1999). The evidence, both ceramic and numismatic, clearly indicates a continuity into the late Roman, Vandal and Byzantine periods; for example, late Roman potsherds recovered from the forum area include ARS Hayes 109 with Glaztönfilm decoration, indicating trade into the seventh century (Arribas et al. 1978; Martín 1983; Mattingly 1983; Gurt 1988; Marot 1990; Palanques 1992; Reynolds 1995; 2010; Gumà et al. 1997; Cau 2004a; Gurt and Marot 1994; Orfila et al. 2000). Scrutiny of old excavation reports shows that various houses in the area of Sa Portella were transformed during the late Roman period, although it is difficult to precisely follow these transformations – they may have been shrinkage of space, or rebuilds, repairs or room loss. Some buildings saw extended use – for example, the 'House of the Bronze Head' was still occupied in the mid-sixth century; also, the 'House of the Two Hoards' featured several phases, being refurbished probably for the last time at the end of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century (Roca and Subias 1996–97; Gumà et al. 1997, 251). Some of the large residential *domus* in the late antique period see partitioning into smaller rooms – something observed in contemporary mainland Spanish (Doenges 2005, 49), North African (Leone 2007; Sears 2007) and Italian cities (Zanini 1998; Christie 2006; Augenti 2006).

Recovery in the forum area is witnessed in the building of some structures and pavements of *opus signinum* over the destruction layer, including also some sort of reoccupation of the *tabernae* (Orfila et al. 1999, 112–13; Orfila 2000a, 154; Orfila et al. 2005; Doenges 2005). Notable is the so-called 'Temple II', initially viewed as early imperial

in date, but re-analysis of the complex, built from reused materials (*spolia*), points to a much later, but undetermined, date (see [Figure 5.3](#)); indeed, excavations outside the ‘temple’ have demonstrated that a rough pavement near to its entrance belongs to the fourth century (Rivas et al. 2006, 34). Clearly, in at least in one of its phases, the building was in use after the third-century fire and formed part of the forum’s public square. Interestingly, the stratigraphy of the forum square reveals some crude, unordered deposits that might indicate a deliberate process to raise the ground level here. Furthermore, a new early imperial public building set in the eastern area of the forum, which features an *opus sectile* pavement, was refurbished in the fourth century or later (Mas et al. 2006); the pavement was cut by later burials (see [Figure 5.5](#)). Finally, in the West Street, south of the forum, deposits have been uncovered that contain large quantities of pottery and some coins from the fourth century AD (Sastre et al. 2008).

A major component of the modified, late Roman city is the creation of a fortified enclosure at the forum (see [Figures 5.3](#) and [5.6](#)), for whose construction a *terminus post quem* of the second half of the fifth century has been proposed (Riera i Rullan et al. 2000; Orfila et al. 1999, 113–16). So far part of the wall and one square tower have been excavated. The wall is 4.46 m wide, with a preserved height of 1.50 m in some parts, and formed by two external wall faces with a core filled with rubble containing a lime-rich mortar, earth and *spolia* or re-used materials (stone, ashlar, architectural elements and epigraphic fragments) taken from adjoining structures (implying their disuse, of course). The north face of the wall was built with good ashlar blocks (many re-used), mortar bonded and with tile fragments for levelling. The southern section of this defensive curtain reused the north walls of the Capitolium and the ‘*Insula of Tabernae*’. We can thus reconstruct here a reduced, defensive nucleus within the heart of the old city, of a setting and design that have strong parallels in Byzantine cities of North Africa, such as Thugga (Pringle 1981, 143, fig.13; Leone 2007, 191–2), and also Italy, e.g. Cosa (Fentress et al. 1991 and this volume; Zanini 1998, 220–22). However, it is important to note that outside of this citadel, other parts of the city (perhaps heavily shrunken and partly ruinous?) continued to be inhabited, as evident in the area of Sa Portella. Was the citadel of the forum for military/administrative purposes only, while the quarter of Sa Portella had a concentration of population and more civilian activities?



Figure 5.5 *Building at the forum of Pollentia with opus sectile pavement cut by a tomb (Photo by Pollentia archaeological team)*

Little is known about the Christianisation of the city and most of the information comes from the necropoleis. In the south of the city, the necropolis of Can Fanals, active from the early imperial period and the subject of several excavations (Llabrés and Isasi 1934; Almagro and Amorós 1953–54), features a diverse typology of tombs, most being inhumations in wooden coffins but some as simple earth-cut burials. Among the items found in one of the tombs was a gold signet sealing, whose seal stone depicts an anchor and two fishes hanging from the cross – clearly signifying a Christian owner (Llabrés and Isasi 1934, 26). Llabrés and Isasi also documented a rectangular building of 19 x 7.0 m, presumed to be a basilica with a possible presbyterium (ibid., 6), although no modern confirmation of this exists. Tombs further south, in Can Baltasar, may denote a continuation of the Can Fanals necropolis. Also, in the area of Santa Ana, diaries from old excavations carried out in the early twentieth century allow us to trace a group of tombs covered by a pavement. In fact, Llabrés and Isasi initially referred to this area as the ‘area of the Christian basilica’ (i.e. a second possible basilica – an idea later dropped), since it was here that they recovered the well-known epitaph of Arguta, recording †ARGUTA/FIDELIS IN PACE/ VIXIT/ANN XL DP/III ID IULIAS. Several authors have analysed this inscription, stressing its Christian

character and some compare its palaeography to other inscriptions found in the early Christian basilicas of Son Peretó and Sa Carrotja (Manacor) (Veny 1965, 68; Vives 1969, 9; Arribas 1978, 138; Amengual 1991–92, 375–6).

Most striking, however, is the presence of a large necropolis extending over the forum area. Dating is problematic: from work in 2005 it appeared that some tombs lay over a mid-seventh century level, which resulted in the proposal of a *terminus post quem* for some of the tombs. Other tombs were seen to cut into the ashlar facing of the fortified enclosure here (Riera i Rullan et al. 1999; 2000; Orfila 2000a, 157; Orfila et al. 2000). The tombs themselves offer no related finds to clarify the dating, but a series of radiocarbon dates are planned on some individuals from recent excavations. The necropolis does not seem to have intruded on the area of the Capitolium, which might signify that this building was still standing and was perhaps even functioning as a church – although against this hypothesis there is evidence of a partial dismantling of the building at an earlier date. The current state of investigations therefore views this ‘Forum necropolis’ as multi-phased (Mas et al. 2006, 190), probably later than the defensive enclosure. It can be aligned with evidence for late intra-urban burials elsewhere, such as at the theatre (Arribas et al. 1973, 27), to show persistence of activity and living (and dying) into early medieval times.



Figure 5.6

Ceramics from older and more recent excavations, the robbing of the ashlar masonry used in the forum fortification, and the so-called

Snail Pits found in Rooms X and Y of the '*Insula of Tabernae*' are signs of occupation during the Muslim period (Riera i Rullan et al. 2000, 130; Doenges 2005); some structures and pavements at the south end of the forum's Portico Street have also been dated to this period. It is important to stress that all the Arab-period materials recovered in relatively recent excavations do not date later than the twelfth century. There is some documentary tie-in: the *Liber Maiolichinus* narrates the Pisan and Catalan raid on Muslim Mallorca in AD 1114–15 and this could well have included an attack on *Pollentia*, perhaps pulling the final curtain down on the old centre (Domingo et al. 2002). Orfila and Riera i Rullan (2002) observe the overall limited finds of Almohad materials (thirteenth century) in the area, whereas such materials are abundant in the destruction layers of many other sites that were affected by the later Catalan conquest of *Mayurqa* of c. AD 1229. Nonetheless, there was some level of renewal: thirteenth-century references encourage some historians to reconstruct a small population settling on the ruins of the Roman and late antique city and building the church of Santa Maria de la Torre (with its related cemetery), a few houses, barns, and at least one street (Mas 1999, 80; Orfila 2000a, 159; Domingo et al. 2002). Potentially the name of the church derived from the presence of a surviving tower of the forum fortification wall; indeed, in a document of 1282, the sale of a property in the area included reference to '*turribus qui ubi sunt*', perhaps denoting multiple towers still visible as landmarks (ibid., 57).

However, the increasing importance of the city of Alcudia, especially from AD 1300 onwards, with the construction of a city wall and a progressive gathering up of the dispersed village population reveal King James II's favouring of this strategic location. This probably meant the definitive abandonment of Santa Maria de la Torre. Surprisingly enough, the new city wall of Alcudia blocked the old path linking the original nucleus of Alcudia with Santa Maria and, therefore, with the ruins of ancient *Pollentia*. It looks as if there was a conscious and probably symbolic intention to close the path *towards* this church and any related settlement over the Roman city. Old *Pollentia* was quitted and the 'lost' city became a stone quarry as well as seeing sporadic use for burials. How the medieval successors viewed the ancient vestiges of *Pollentia* is something that merits further exploration.

Palma

Roman *Palma* most likely lies beneath the modern city of Palma de Mallorca, although we still await epigraphic proof for this. The Roman city was laid out along a promontory at Almudayna and some aspects

of its urban layout have been proposed (e.g. Rosselló 1961; 1983; Orfila 1988; García Delgado 2000; Cau 2004b). Data regarding the late Roman fabric and its transformation are scarce, although some late Roman materials have been recovered, such as residual finds at the bishop's palace and at the cathedral (Cau 2004b, 228; Riera i Rullan and Orfila 2005, 318). There are also possible early medieval tombs in the convent of Santa Clara (Riera i Frau 1993, 180) and Pelleteria Street (Inglada and Tarongí 2005). Recent discoveries in the eastern part of the city near the medieval wall and relatively close to the sea have shown some likely fourth-century structures (Torres 2005, 293), which may signify a larger extension of the city than previously thought. Two layers found in the excavations of Can Muntanyans in San Bernat Street also reflect secure late antique activity in this part of the urban space. The study of many of the recovered materials is still pending but an interim examination seems to suggest both Vandal and Byzantine-period ceramic assemblages (Cau 2004b, 228).

Despite such material evidence, little is known regarding the late topography of *Palma*. Potentially the layout of the walls of the neighbourhood of the Almudayna corresponds to a defensive curtain from Late Antiquity – previously having been viewed as earlier Roman in date (or else an extension to the early city). More likely the wall relates to the late Roman fortification of the upper part of the city, perhaps to create a citadel, as Gutiérrez has suggested: ‘... in questo oscuro periodo, che va dal IV al IX secolo, sul terreno della Palma romana si costruisce un ridotto fortificato, in un panorama simile a quello che comincia a profilarsi a Cartagena, prima in mano ai Bizantini e forse più tardi in mano ad un potere autonomo ...’ (1996, 61). Excavations of a section of the city wall inside the bishop's palace supported a dating of this part of the fortification at least to Late Antiquity or later (Cau 2004b), whereas investigation of the walls further east in Can Bordils pointed to a Muslim date (Riera i Frau 1993, 169).

Some authors argue that the city was in terminal decline by the end of antiquity, although Gutiérrez (1987, 206) notes that this would mean that the Arabs would have settled on the remains of a largely ruinous city. Riera i Frau (1993, 27–9) shares this opinion, pointing to a concise reference in the *Liber Maiolichinus* that narrates the Pisan-Catalan crusade against Arab-held Mayûrqa in 1414–15 and which suggests that there were few inhabitants immediately prior to the Islamic conquest. Most probably the establishment of the Islamic Madîna Mayûrqa in this area was not casual but instead signified that something of old *Palma* was still active. Indeed, the *Vrbs Vetus* cited in the *Liber Maiolichinus* has been interpreted as denoting the remains of

the old Roman city embedded in Madîna Mayûrqa and in its different fortified enclosures (Rosselló Bordoy 1961).

Menorca and the Cities of the Religious Dispute

The circular of Bishop Severus is an essential document for the study of the Christian and Jewish communities of the island of Menorca (Amengual 1991–92, 2008). It provides interesting information regarding the urban nuclei of *Magona* and *Iamona* at the beginning of the fifth century, both defined by Severus as ‘*parva oppida*’. This precious text narrates the different episodes that led to the conversion of the Jewish community of *Magona* in the autumn of 418, a conversion that was motivated by pressure from the Christian community of *Iamona* after the arrival of the relics of Saint Stephen. The letter indicates a varied demographic configuration: *Magona* had a very important concentration of Jews, whereas *Iamona* was mainly a Christian city with no Jewish presence. The lack of references to *Sanisera* in this text has been interpreted by Amengual (1991–92, 165) as a sign that this city had greatly declined by this period and was too insignificant to warrant mention; however, Sastre (2000 15) states that the circular does not need to refer to the third city because the document is centred on events between *Iamona* and *Magona*. But Severus’ letter naturally offers few insights into the Christian and Jewish topography of *Iamona* and *Magona*. The fact that Severus was based in *Iamona* has led some scholars to posit a bishop’s palace and church there. In *Magona*, we hear that Christians burnt down a synagogue, close to a small elevation within the fortified city; the synagogue remains were then demolished by the converted Jews to build a basilica. We also know from Severus of the presence of a basilica outside the city walls (visible, apparently, from the house of Melecus inside the city), which received the relics of Saint Stephen (Amengual 1991–92, 165–7). But besides Bishop Severus’ words, how far has archaeology provided insights into the urban nuclei of Menorca in the late Roman and post-Roman periods?

(i) Iamo/Iamona

Roman *Iamo* (or *Iamona* in Severus’ text) is corroborated by both epigraphic and archaeological data. The archaeological evidence allows for the definition of the Roman and late Roman city in a wide area of the ancient quarter of Ciudadela de Menorca (Moll and Sánchez 2000, 16; Riera i Rullan 2003; Sánchez León and García Ríaza 2004; Riera i Rullan and Orfila 2005). A late antique necropolis was sited between Passeig de San Nicolás and Camí de Baix, while remains of a possible Christian basilica have been uncovered around

the area of Es Trabucs, or Camí de Baix, along with various burials, a square mosaic, and coins (Nicolás 1983, 266; Navarro 1988, 30). And in the area of the Pla de Sant Joan, a ceramic dump has been examined dating primarily to the first half of the fifth century, containing sherds of ARS – Hayes 59, 61, 67, or 59D (Nicolás 1983, 265–6; Cau 2004a, 12). Recently, a series of rescue excavations yielded additional evidence of late antique urban occupation: those of C. Rita produced examples of ARS forms Hayes 67, 99, 104, 105, and 90B; tombs covered with *signinum* have been traced in the area of the port; and in Correus ARS of the fourth to seventh centuries has been recovered (Riera i Rullan 2000). Finally, excavations underneath the fourteenth-century cathedral of Santa Maria de Ciudadela identified a number of structures that were abandoned and covered by clayey layers in the second half of the fourth century; there were also some later, but residual materials (Riera i Rullan et al. 2005).

(ii) Mago/Magona

Magona underlies modern Mahón at the bottom of one of the most spectacular natural harbours in the entire Mediterranean. The place name, archaeological findings, and inscriptions mentioning its juridical status provide a secure identification; the archaeological work and results here have been recently synthesised (Rita 1982; Plantalamor and Pons 1995; Riera i Rullan 2003; Orfila and Riera i Rullan 2004). The excavations indicate that the Roman city occupied a small promontory near the port and its origins may lie in the fourth century BC. While some traces of the urban planning can be reconstructed, we rely on epigraphic evidence for guidance on public buildings such as the theatre and a temple dedicated to the Magna Mater and Aethis, but we have little real insight into their designs and evolutions. The city's extent can be defined by an array of tombs identified in different areas of *Magona* (Rita 1982; 1984).

Data are very scarce for the site in Late Antiquity, but the discovery of levels with late Roman ceramics certainly testify to some occupation during this period: for example, at Alfonso III street, fifth-century ARS D (Hayes 86/2 and 91) was recovered (Rita and Plantalamor 1988, 169); late Roman finds also come from an unpublished excavation of an extramural site. No signs yet exist to attest either the documented synagogue or basilica.

(iii) Sanisera

Sanisera lies on the north coast of Menorca at the open site of Sa Nitja. An indigenous, pre-Roman settlement existed in this area, but with the Roman conquest an important military camp was established (see

Contreras et al. 2006) which later developed into an urban centre of fair extent. The city was prosperous enough into the third century AD, but perhaps then shrank, if retaining some population at least until the seventh century (Rita et al. 1988). Of the late antique presences, a notable discovery is Building C (see [Figure 5.7](#)), a rectangular construction of 450 m² (but only part excavated) made of local irregular stone divided into eight functional spaces. Two rooms formed accommodation facilities, two were store rooms, and one was a barn; two industrial areas with deposits and two patios completed the complex. The building has been interpreted as having a mixed industrial and agricultural role.

Originally, two main phases of occupation were proposed, including the blocking of some entrances – the first in the fourth century AD and a second phase in the sixth century AD. Examination of the published ceramic materials from some of these rooms reveals some African amphora type Keay 62 and globular containers (Rita 1994, 327) that might nowadays be dated later than originally proposed. It would not be surprising if the abandonment of some rooms happened only in the seventh century AD. Some similarities are witnessed with a ceramic deposit found in the collapse of Room 20 in the early Christian complex of Cap des Port (Fornells) not far from Sa Nitja (Palol 1982).

Just a few metres north of Building C in the so-called Area A some walls and pavements were associated with a necropolis (see [Figure 5.8](#)). The walls were of *opus incertum* with several orthostats and the floor was of *opus signinum*. Several tombs were uncovered: while nails from wooden coffins were found, there were no specific finds; on the basis of the typology of the tombs (normally with flagstone covers), the burial positioning, and the thick layer of *signinum* covering the tombs, a late antique date is claimed. Finally, the discovery of some liturgical elements at the site and its vicinity may recommend the existence of a Christian church hereabouts (Rita et al. 1988, 48; Rita and Murillo 1989; Rita 1994; 1997, 79; Gornés and Nicolás 1991; Tuset 1996, 282). Maybe the building with the burials itself could be a basilica or a related construction, or this could be uncovered in any other part of the site.

What is not yet known is whether *Sanisera* was fortified in the late Empire and whether this defensive capability attracted Byzantine and later attention. Probably the site had some occupation but it was no longer a real city. However, remains close to the sea here of a possible Muslim mosque may help show that some settlement persisted into the Middle Ages (Kirchner 1999; Calvo 2004).

(iv) Ibiza: From Foederata to Episcopal Residence

Ebusus, also with Punic roots, was *foederata* of Rome (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, III, 76–7), and thus not damaged in the military actions of Q. Caecilius Metellus. The evidence related to the Roman centre has been recently summarised, showing that here too information is very scarce for Late Antiquity (Ramon 1986; 2004; 2005). However, the city is known in the Byzantine period via a letter from Licinianus of Cartagena to Vicentius, the bishop of *Ebusus*, sent at the end of the sixth century in response to a previous letter from Vicentius; in his response, Licinianus chastised Vicentius for giving credibility to a letter that had Jewish content regarding observing rest on Sunday (Amengual 1991–92; 2008; Zucca 1998, 213). This document makes clear that Vicentius oversaw a church; probably this was in the main city of *Ebusus* but the document does not prove this. Yet, so far, intensive archaeological research has been unable to prove a late antique occupation here. Only marginal evidence is available, notably a ceramic deposit of the Vandal period found in Es Castell on the acropolis, containing large quantities of Ebusitan coarse wares, African Red Slip Ware (Hayes 61B, 64, 67, 73, 80A/B, 81, 87A, 91 A/B, 99, 104A, 12/102), amphorae, and some imported cooking ware. The proposed date for the assemblage is of the last quarter of the fifth or the first quarter of the sixth century, and thus prior to the Byzantine occupation of the islands (Ramon and Cau 1997).

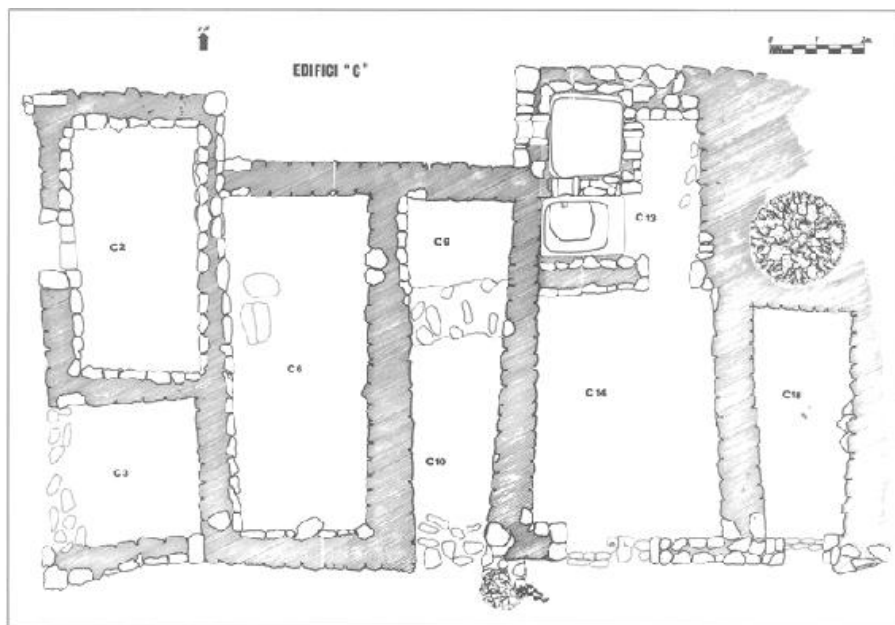


Figure 5.7 Plan of building C from Sa Nitja (Menorca) (Drawing by Jaime Murillo in Rita 1994, 323)

A scarcity of other finds, however, and the lack of any Byzantine

materials led Ramon (2005, 488) to hypothesise an abandonment of both city and acropolis by the first third of the sixth century. Against this view, we can note results from an important necropolis identified at the city's northern outskirts. Most interestingly, the excavations here also revealed part of a paved road which corresponds with one of the entrances to the city; at the sides of this road, two squared funerary monuments were found along with nearly 46 tombs. The cemetery probably originated in the third century and saw intensive burial activity between the fourth and the sixth centuries; however, the latest tombs should belong to the seventh century given the results of radiocarbon analysis: AD 619–659 (65 per cent probability) or 595–675 (95 per cent probability) (ibid., 490).

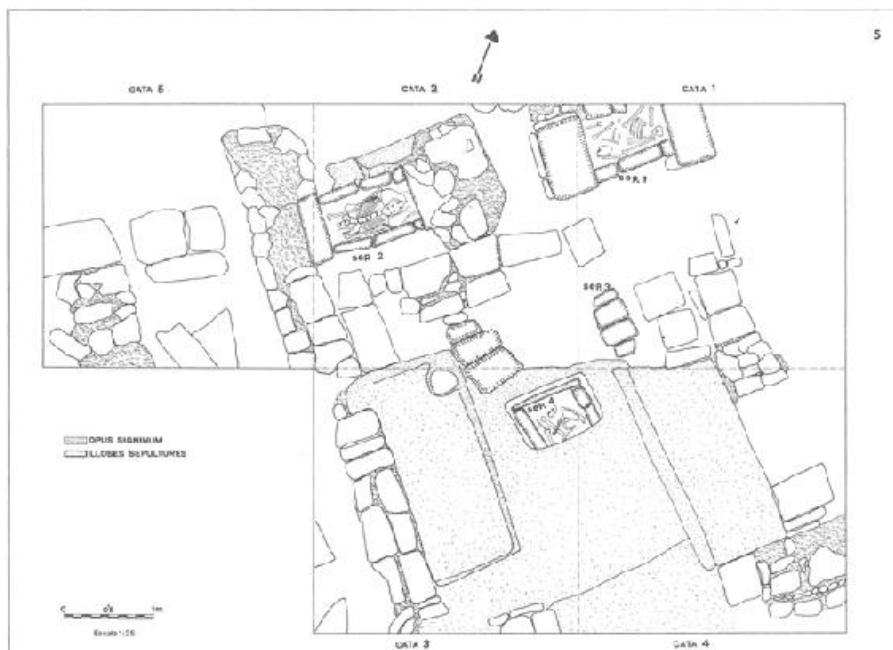


Figure 5.8 Plan of the structures found in Sector C from Sa Nitja (Menorca) (after Rita et al. 1988, 46)

Discussion

Although the extent of the urban changes that occurred and the nature of late antique urbanism on the Balearic Islands are still largely unknown, the data appear to concur in showing the first significant transformations coming in the early to mid-third century AD. Such are most apparent in the forum of *Pollentia* where the Portico Street was closed and many *tabernae* underwent structural changes. Subsequent destruction by a fire in around AD 270–280, evident in different parts

of the city, will have enforced radical changes in space, marked also by defensive wall construction (Orfila et al. 1999; Doenges 2005; Orfila 2000a; 2007); *Palma* and *Bocchor* too offer some signs of like upheaval (Estarellas and Merino 2005). What is less clear in *Pollentia* and also at *Palma*, is how these old cities were rebuilt and re-ordered and who was overseeing much of this. Arguably, the fourth century is the most weakly understood also – for example, what were the structures traced in *Iamona* in excavations under the present cathedral? More is needed to gauge the economic status of these towns after AD 300.

The early fifth-century Encyclical of Severus forms a valuable text for Menorca and gives crucial guidance regarding the Christianisation of the cities and islands, although marrying documentary and archaeological evidence is difficult – thus nothing is known archaeologically for the Christian topography of *Iamona* and *Magona* even if Severus claims cities with significant Jewish and Christian populations and a clear ecclesiastical organisation. In *Sanisera*, it has been proposed that there was a decline in the third century and only a marginal occupation from the fourth to the seventh centuries AD. Perhaps the fact that Severus does not mention *Sanisera* in his text could be taken as proof of its demise. In *Pollentia*, our slight evidence may suggest a progressive Christianisation of the necropolis (and with a potential cemeterial church), but we remain unclear on how long such extramural necropoleis continued and when intramural burials commenced (e.g. the epigraph of Arguta and the necropolis of the forum) and how these were articulated – were they sited near churches or in open spaces?

Can we claim to see traces on the Balearics of the invasions and warfare that affected much of the late Roman Empire? While some scholars prefer to see the impacts of such warfare in the towns (e.g. Tarradell 1978, 340), the real causes of the fire and destruction of several parts of the city of *Pollentia* are still unknown and archaeology is not a secure tool for guiding our interpretation. It is important to stress that after this violent later third-century event, some parts of *Pollentia* were abandoned and this movement profoundly changed the city's old imperial image. The first Vandal raid on the islands in 425 and their effective conquest in 455 were traditionally related to some of the material destructions and to the wider demise of *Pollentia* (e.g. *ibid.*, 353–7; Arribas et al. 1973, 37). Yet in reality we currently possess little evidence regarding the Vandal incursions and conquests. Only one of the two hoards found in the 'House of the Two Hoards' in Sa Portella is thought to have been a result of an emergency cache in response to the attack. What stands out more, in fact, chiefly from the ceramic evidence from sites such as *Pollentia*, Es Castell in Ibiza, and

Can Muntanyans in Palma, is that the cities continued to be occupied in the Vandal period and that these continued to be immersed in the commercial currents of the late Roman Mediterranean. Furthermore, the reference to the bishops of the Balearic Islands being called to the Church Synod at Vandal Carthage in 484 indicates an active and presumably well organised Christianity during this period. In the countryside, the villas at both Can Sorà (also known as Ses Païsses de Cala d'Hort) in the west part of the island of Ibiza and Sa Mesquida in Mallorca show cisterns being used as rubbish dumps in the first half of the fifth century. Ramon (1984; 1994) has interpreted this accumulation of material, at least for the case of Can Sorà, as levels of cleaning of the site and dumping of the related rubbish, following a ransacking by the Vandals. That site activity resumed is shown by subsequent rubbish – if not in major quantities – from the Byzantine period, the profound reorganisation of building A, and by the abandonment layer of the building dated to the early eighth century.

The Byzantine military reoccupation had some effect on the cities, as probably manifested in the fortification of the forum of *Pollentia*. Here we also see clear signs of occupation in and around the forum, and the residential quarter of Sa Portella can be dated to the seventh century. The letter from Licinianus to Vicentius meanwhile indicates a well-organised and well-connected Church administration at the end of the sixth century, although this does not necessarily mean that associated episcopal towns were thriving or substantial. The presence of one bishop for each island as occurs in the Vandal period seems to be applied in the Byzantine ecclesiastical organisation. Indeed, this period, especially from the mid-seventh century onwards, is difficult to recognise in the archaeological record, suggesting materially impoverished communities – perhaps reusing older built structures more or occupying less durable structures which are very hard to recognise unless via large-scale excavations.

In the early eighth century, the first Muslim raiding parties assailed the islands and undoubtedly targeted some of the urban nuclei. However, the effective conquest of the islands by the Arabs did not come until the beginning of the tenth century. The roles, content and quality of the cities and their structures during this extended period of time are still very much unknown and most ideas remain nothing more than conjectures. There is evidence of occupation until the Islamic period and the medieval Christian conquest in *Pollentia*, although the city was in no way comparable to the imperial provincial city whose ruins must have long remained visible. Also, according to some records, *Palma* may have been only partially occupied. For the other cities, paraphrasing Reinés (1863) in *Destrucción de Pollentia*, silence is the only available response. Thus, in reality we know

precious little about the 'cities' (perhaps for this phase we might simply call them 'nucleated settlements') and their populations that the Muslim forces started to attack during the eighth and ninth centuries.

Conclusion

Of the cities briefly discussed in this chapter, *Pollentia* and *Sanisera* are the only abandoned classical cities in the process of systematic investigation. Not surprisingly, these are the cities that have provided most information regarding their urban topography and evolutions. However, the reasons these cities were abandoned are still unknown. While *Sanisera* probably declined progressively in favour of *Magona* and *Iamona*, in the case of *Pollentia*, it is clear that the development of medieval Alcudia by James II marked the end of any afterlife to the old Roman provincial city: its ruins were heavily plundered for building materials, embedding the memories of the old *colonia* in the walls of the medieval city. As Mattingly wrote many years ago, the town 'was neither destroyed by the Vandals nor suddenly abandoned by its inhabitants; rather it may have died a slow death in the face of mounting difficulties' (1983, 248).

The available data are still too limited and permit only interim statements on the transformations wrought on the cities of the Balearics during and after Late Antiquity. Research in *Palma*, *Magona*, *Iamona*, and *Ebusus* is subsidiary of urban development and rescue excavations, and many of the actual cities are not endowed with or set within any clear programme of urban archaeology. Only *Pollentia* and *Sanisera*, as classical abandoned sites, and *Bocchor*, the old *foederata*, are being investigated to a level enabling research questions to be drawn and tackled. The evident problem is that the later phases have been damaged to variable extents by modern cultivation activities, medieval and recent robbing, building activity, etc. An added problem is the lack of clear contexts after the mid-seventh century that make it very difficult to recognise the material culture of the last moments of Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. However, research in this domain is currently being pursued in combination with the transformation of the landscape and of the material culture, particularly ceramics. This is possible in insular systems such as the Balearics because the limited territory permits clear interaction among the data. The final aim of the current research is thus to position the Balearic Islands in a wider debate on the transformations that occurred during Late Antiquity within the Mediterranean and particularly among insular systems. It is a lengthy task and quick results cannot be expected, but the challenge is an important one:

understanding the loss of the cities of the Balearics may provide important clues for understanding urban, social and economic trajectories elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

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Chapter 6

Recopolis: *Urbs Relicta*? An Historico-Archaeological Debate

Isabel Velázquez and Gisela Ripoll

In memory of Eduardo Ripoll Perelló

Dulcissimo patri et sapienti ac praeclaro magistro.

Apud nos tua memoria semper manebit.

Introduction

This chapter explores not an abandoned or lost classical city of Roman foundation, but a new city, established by Visigothic royalty a century after Roman control of *Hispania* had fallen away. It is a royal creation that was founded for specific political reasons and a site that failed as a city largely in the subsequent re-articulation of royal control. Understanding these historical contexts is thus crucial for understanding the nature, function and fate of *Recopolis*; at the same time, examining the archaeology helps reveal the scale, investment and potential of this late sixth-century *urbs extincta*.

The Foundation of a Royal City: The Contexts of Creation

The most specific and explicit information that we possess on the city of *Recopolis* comes from John of Biclar in a well-known passage of his *Chronicle*, in which he states that the Visigothic king Leovigild ([Figure 6.1](#)), once he had managed to overcome various uprisings and attacks, returned to live with his people and founded a city in Celtiberia in the year 578 (*Chron.* 50 = a. 578.4):¹

Leouegildus rex, extinctis undique tyrannis et peruasoribus Ispanie superatis sortitus requiem propriam cum plebe resedit et ciuitatem in Celtiberia ex nomine filii condidit, que Recopolim nuncupatur: quam miro opere in menibus et suburbanis adornans, priuilegia populo noue urbis instituit.

After having suppressed usurpers from all sides and overcome the invaders of *Hispania*, King Leovigild found peace to reside together with his people and to found a city in Celtiberia, which he named *Recopolis* after his son. He endowed it with admirably constructed

walls and suburbs and issued privileges to the people of the new city.



Figure 6.1

Isidore of Seville offers an even shorter report of the event (HG 51): *Condidit etiam ciuitatem in Celtiberia, quam ex nomine filii Recopolim nominauit* ('He also founded a city in Celtiberia which he named *Recopolis* after his son'). Despite the brevity of these entries, a number of important points can be deduced, and other questions which, for the moment, cannot be totally answered can be raised.

Firstly, the foundation of the city of *Recopolis* can be seen as comparable to other foundations or rebuilding programmes of major scope that must have been carried out by certain Visigothic kings to commemorate military conquests and as symbols of their exercise of power. The foundation of cities mentioned in the literary sources should also surely be seen in defensive terms: in other words, they were sites that stated, strengthened and ensured control of the military gains that had been achieved.

For example, in 581, a few years after the foundation of *Recopolis*, Leovigild founded another city, named *Victoriacum* (perhaps to equate with Vitoria or possibly Iruña; some scholars have even suggested Vitoriano, now the site of a village in the province of Álava), in honour of his successful military campaign in the north of the Iberian Peninsula, marked by the annexation of a *pars Vasconiae* to the Visigothic *regnum* (John of Biclar, *Chron.* 60 = a. 581.3). Similarly, at a later date, King Suintila founded the city of *Ologicus*, probably present-day Olite (Isidore of Seville, HG, 63.1–12).

These urban foundations constitute clear examples of the exercise of power and a symbolic instrument for wielding it. As pointed out elsewhere (Ripoll and Velázquez 2008), such regal acts align with the Roman and Byzantine tradition associated with the emperors' capacity and privilege to carry out this sort of lavish endowment: there are various well known examples of cities dedicated to members of the imperial family, such as *Basilinopolis*, *Eusebiopolis* or *Irenopolis*, and Visigothic *Recopolis* fits well within this group of cities constructed (or renovated or restored and reformed) and named in honour of select royal figures. However, the first question that arises is precisely related to the name: *Recopolis* honours one of King Leovigild's sons, and does not bear the king's own name; thus, the name does not flag

the true *conditor urbis* – otherwise it would have been **Leovigildopolis*, to match Hadrian's foundation of *Hadrianopolis* (Adrianople-Edirne), Constantine's *Constantinopolis*, and Justinian's *Justinianopolis*.

The name of *Recopolis* refers to the younger of Leovigild's sons, Reccared. Its formation is based on the first thematic element of Reccared's name, which, as in the case of many names of Gothic origin, is made up by two elements: the first *rec(c)-* is derived from Gothic *wrikan*, 'to persecute, to chase' (Piel 1960, 441 – though see Morlet 1971–72, I 187); the second, which was not incorporated in that of the city, comes from Gothic *reþs*, 'advice, counsel' (Piel and Kremer 1976, 22). The city may have been called *Recopolis* rather than **Recaredopolis* for reasons of euphony, although, in the light of other forms such as the ones cited above, it would have been more usual to use this second form. However, as can be seen, the same type of formation characteristic of the Roman imperial cities is followed, adding as the second element the noun of Greek origin '*polis*', as well as the link with the morpheme *-o*, as the final element of the first part of the composition. (There is no need to resort to a formation from the root **reg-*, present in *rex*, *regnum*, etc., which would have maintained the voiced guttural in **reg-* because it remained in an intervocalic position. After all, both John of Biclar and Isidore of Seville attribute the city's name to Leovigild's son, if not expressly mentioning Reccared's name – but see below).

Dynastic Disputes and Divisions

Why, though, was this city dedicated to the king's younger son and not to his elder one, Hermenegild? The foundation date of the city, or perhaps the date when its construction was started, indicated by John of Biclar as 578, falls within a period of relative calm in which the serious conflict between Leovigild and Hermenegild, who was accused by the Hispanic sources of being a *tyrannus*, attempting to usurp his father's throne, had still not occurred. According to Isidore of Seville (*HG*, 91), when it did happen, Hermenegild's uprising was supported by the King of the Sueves, Miro, who went to Seville to support Hermenegild – in contrast, John of Biclar is very ambiguous in his wording, leaving open the possibility that Miro went to help the father.

Although the origin of these family disagreements has traditionally been linked to the confrontation between Gosuintha, the widow of Athanagild and subsequently Leovigild's wife, and her granddaughter Ingundis, Hermenegild's wife, we believe that John of Biclar's text offers other, different information and that it relates Hermenegild's rebellion against his father directly as being instigated by Gosuintha

herself and her faction of supporters. Gregory of Tours (*Hist. Franc.* V, 38) informs us that, because of her Arian faith, Gosuintha despised her granddaughter, the daughter of her own daughter Brunecildis, who was a Catholic, and Sigibert of Austrasia. Ingundis arrived in the Visigothic *regnum* as a consequence of her marriage to Hermenegild and her grandmother endeavoured to convince her to abjure her Catholic faith, even trying to force her to accept baptism into Arianism. The well-known expression ‘*domestica rixa*’ in the passage of John of Biclar alluded to has usually been related to the tense situation between Gosuintha and Ingundis, and the cause of the couple’s transfer to Seville, so as to avoid greater evils.

Nevertheless, in our opinion, this *domestica rixa* should be understood as a family dispute of far greater significance; that is to say, as the confrontation between father and son, and thus between *rex* and *tyrannus*. If correct, the strange expression as regards Gosuintha’s instigation of Hermenegild would make greater sense, since, although once again John of Biclar (*Chron.* 54, a. 579.3) is ambiguous, his words could be interpreted to show that the queen herself instigated Hermenegild’s move and was thus a (shadow) conspirator against Leovigild, her husband at that moment:

Leouegildo ergo quita pace regnante, aduersariorum securitatem domestica rixa conturbat. Nam eodem anno filius eius Ermenegildus factione Gosuinthe regine tirannidem assumens in Ispali ciuitate rebellione facta recluditur et alias ciuitates atque castella secum contra patrem rebellare facit. Que causa in prouinciam Ispanie tam Gothis quam Romanis maioris exitii quam aduersariorum infestatio fuit.

With Leovigild thus ruling in peace and quiet, secure from external enemies, a domestic quarrel arose. For in that same year, his son Hermenegild, with a faction loyal to the queen Gosuintha, seized power illegitimately and broke out in open revolt in the city of Seville. He made other cities and fortresses rebel with him against his father, causing greater destruction in the province of Spain – to Goths and Romans alike – than any attack by external enemies.

In this respect, it is symptomatic that Hermenegild and Ingundis’ son should have been called Athanagild, like his great-grandfather and Gosuintha’s first husband, in spite of the supposed hostility between grandmother and granddaughter. Perhaps the relationships between Gosuintha and her granddaughter and the latter’s husband should be reconsidered, even though both Gregory of Tours and Gregory the Great centre the cause of the revolt only on the religious persecution of Hermenegild by his father Leovigild, because the former had converted to Catholicism thanks to the ‘evangelisation’ of his own wife, Ingundis, and of Bishop Leander of Seville. Leaving aside the differences in religious beliefs between the grandmother and

granddaughter, it makes more sense to consider a different attitude on the part of Gosuintha towards Hermenegild (a non-hostile one and, therefore, at least suspicious towards her own husband, Leovigild), especially if we take into account that subsequently she sought to oppose and plot against Reccared, Leovigild's other son, who remained loyal to his father.

Another question that is often sidelined regards Hermenegild's transfer to Seville immediately after marrying Ingundis. Gregory of Tours (*Hist. Franc.* V, 38) states: *Leuigildus dedit eis unam de ciuitatibus, in qua residentes regnarent* ('Leovigild handed over one of his cities as their place of residence and seat of government'). The term *regnare* should not therefore be understood in the sense of Hermenegild's *de facto* independence from the father, but rather as a form of hierarchisation of command, comparable to the Roman imperial diarchies, and subsequently under Diocletian's Tetrarchy, with the co-existence of *Augusti* and Caesars: this marked power sharing, not a division of the Empire. Such an association of power also occurred in Byzantium a half century before our events between Justinian and Justin.

When Leovigild decided to associate his sons with rule of the *regnum*, not only was he following the imperial model, but also carrying out an approach already successfully tried by himself and his brother Liuva. The latter succeeded Athanagild in 568 (John of Biclar, *Chron.* 6 = a. 568.3), and in the following year Leovigild, while Liuva was still alive, was appointed in *Hispania Citerior*, marrying Gosuintha, Athanagild's widow, and restoring Visigothic territory (John of Biclar, *Chron.* 10 = a. 569.4):

Huius imperatoris [sc. Iustini] anno tertio, Leouegildus, germanus Liubani regis, superstite fratre in regnum citerioris Ispanie constituitur, Gosuintam relictam Atanaildi in coniugium accepit et prouinciam Gothorum, que iam pro rebellione diuersorum fuerat diminuta, mirabiliter ad pristinos reuocat terminos.

In the third year of this emperor (sc. Justin), Leovigild, the brother of King Liuva, was appointed king of *Hispania Citerior* while his brother was still living: He received in marriage Gosuintha, the widow of Athanagild, and wonderfully restored to its former boundaries the province of the Goths, which by that time had been reduced by the rebellions of various men.

This same passage might suggest an absolute separation between the two brothers and kings, who reigned in different places (which to a certain extent actually happened), and that Liuva only ruled for one year, with Leovigild henceforth taking power. Isidore helps clarify all in his *Historia Gothorum* (HG, 48) by explicitly mentioning the concept

of association with the throne, and stating that Liuva's reign lasted three years, although from the point of view of royal chronology he should be reckoned as ruling for one year only. Taking this into account and observing the total lack of reference to Liuva once Leovigild had been named co-ruler, the impression emerges that Liuva did not stand out in any respect in terms of rule or actions. What is more precisely indicated is the division of territories between the two of them for purposes of government: Liuva was satisfied with *Gallia Narbonensis*, while Leovigild took charge of *Hispania*. However, the actual extent of territory controlled by each brother remains unclear; in particular we do not know what part of the former province of *Tarraconensis* was governed by each, and what form this government took, whether there was any connection between the two brothers and joint policies, or whether each enjoyed *de facto* independence. The reference to this division can be found in both the brief and the longer versions of Isidore of Seville (*RB* and *RL* respectively), with a number of variations between the two:

HG, 48: *Aera DCV [DCVIII RB], anno II imperii Iustini minoris post Athanagildum Liuuu Narbonae Gothis [regno RB] praeficitur regnans [regnauitque RB] annis tribus. Qui secundo anno postquam adeptus est principatum, Leuuigildum fratrem non solum succesorem, sed et participem regni sibi [suum socium regni RB] constituit Spaniaque [Hispaniaque RB] administrationi praefecit, ipse [autem add. RB] Galliae regno contentus [est add. RB]. Sicque regnum duos capuit [cepit RB], dum nulla potestas patiens consortis sit. Huic autem unus tantum annus in ordine temporum reputatur, reliqui Leuuigildo fratri [fratri om. RB] adnumerantur.*

In the era 605 (AD 567) [608 RB = AD 570], in the second year of the emperor Justin the younger, Liuva was, after Athanagild, made king of the Goths [of the kingdom RB] in Narbonne and ruled (and rules) for three years: In the second year after he had secured his rule, he established his brother Leovigild not only as his successor, but as his partner in the kingship [he established his brother Leovigild as his associate in the kingdom RB], appointing him to rule Spain, while he contented himself [on the other hand RB] with the rule of *Gallia Narbonensis*. Thus the kingdom had two rulers, despite the fact that no power willingly accepts a consort. In the succession of reigns, only one year is counted to that of Liuva, the rest are counted to his brother Leovigild.

Without going into, at this juncture, the question of Isidore's assessment that it was impossible for there to be shared governments, or the subtle but significant differences between the two versions of the *Historia Gothorum* in this section (which should denote Isidore himself composing a second, re-elaborated version of his own work in the *RL* – see Velázquez 2008), it is certain that this kind of 'two-

headed' *regnum* had existed between Liuva and Leovigild, apparently without problems. Nevertheless, Leovigild did not have to wait long to become the true *rex*. The first step was to marry the widow of King Athanagild, thereby bringing to his side those noble factions of the monarch prior to his brother. On Liuva's death (we have no indication of any assassination), the kingdom of *Hispania* and *Gallia Narbonensis* remained united under Leovigild's rule (John of Biclar, *Chron.* 24 = a. 573.2).

Leovigild is the first Visigothic king definitely known to have developed a true territorial state policy, by means of seeking the unity and expansion of the *regnum*, not only from a military point of view, but also through his political, legislative and religious approach; but this search for unification did not represent an obstacle for him when it came to associating his two sons, Hermenegild and Reccared, with him on the throne, or at least to appoint them as joint rulers to administer and govern his dominions. Comparable and successful shared rule appears also in the second half of the seventh century between Chindasuinth and Reccesuinth, and later between Egica and Wittiza (see Ripoll and Velázquez 2008).

Leovigild's decision to associate his sons with him as joint rulers must have come almost immediately after the death of Liuva. In fact, according to the Chronicle of John of Biclar, both events took place in the same year (*anno VII Iustini imperatoris, qui est Leouegildi V annus*). Between the two references in the Chronicle (*Chron.* 24 and 27 = a. 573.2 and 5), there are but two, non-'Hispanic' entries, one referring to the illness, of brain-related nature, of the Byzantine emperor, Justin, and the other to the outbreak of bubonic plague in Constantinople. The news of their association with the throne is preceded by a mention of the conquest of Sabaria and the devastation of the Sappi:

Leouegildus rex Sabariam ingressus Sapos uastat, et prouinciam ipsam in suam redigit ditionem, duosque filios suos ex amissa coniuge, Ermenegildum et Reccaredum, consortes facit.

King Leovigild invaded Sabaria and devastated the Sappi, bringing the province under his dominion. He made Hermenegild and Reccared, his two sons by his repudiated wife, associates in his rule.

Leovigild's decision is unlikely to have surprised either noble or ecclesiastical circles at the court; the two sons were to be joint rulers with their father in their capacity as men of confidence, as 'ministers' of something of this nature (Campos 1960, 119). If the noted information provided by Gregory of Tours and John of Biclar is reliable, from the very moment that Hermenegild married Ingundis, Leovigild allocated a specific area for his elder son to govern and

reside in: *Baetica* and, more precisely, *Hispalis*.

It seems obvious that by associating his sons, Leovigild was seeking to establish a hereditary family dynasty as opposed to an elective monarchy. He himself had succeeded his brother, and now he wished to ensure the succession through his sons, but we are unaware whether at any moment he feared a possible future conflict between the two brothers. A share in rule will have helped each learn how to govern in the kingdom. Furthermore, logically, Hermenegild's primogeniture ought to have been the determining factor as to who would be the heir to the main throne. Indeed, the marriage policy constructed around Hermenegild sought to ensure a peaceful future for the king-to-be. By giving him in marriage to Ingundis, the daughter of Sigibert I and Brunichildis, the latter, in turn, being Gosuintha's daughter, he was establishing a direct family relationship between his son and his own wife and, by extension, with the sector of the nobility that had wielded power under his predecessor, Athanagild, on the throne, as Leovigild himself had done by marrying Gosuintha, as was mentioned above.

However, it was not long before the situation started to deteriorate. As discussed, it was in the same year of 579, when Hermenegild was given in marriage and went to live in Seville, that the latter's rebellion took place. It is even possible that when Isidore (*HG*, 91) alluded to the lack of viability of shared power – *sicque regnum duos capuit (cepit RB)*, *dum nulla potestas patiens consortis sit* – when writing about the rule of Liuva and Leovigild, in the passage mentioned above, he had in mind the failure of Leovigild's attempt with respect to his son Hermenegild, although Reccared always remained associated with his father and loyal. However, that was no longer the same situation. Reccared ruled jointly with his father, but no division of territorial power need be seen in this arrangement, but rather a policy oriented towards guaranteeing the succession, in the same way as Chindasuinth was to act many years later when he appointed his son Reccesuinth joint ruler.

The only specific reference to Reccared participating in affairs of government during the joint reign relates to the episode of the Frankish invasion of Narbonensis in 585/6, just one year before Leovigild's death and in the same year as Hermenegild was murdered in Tarragona by Sisbert. Leovigild sent his only surviving son, perhaps because he himself was too old or sick, to fight the Frankish army sent by King Guntram of Burgundy (Gregory of Tours, *Hist. Franc.* VIII.30). John of Biclar points out that King Reccared, after a fierce battle, returned victorious to his father's side (*Chron.* 74 = a. 585.4). The next mention of Reccared recorded by John of Biclar (*Chron.* 79 = a. 586.2) is when, in the following year, he 'took up the sceptre of the

kingdom' on his father's death 'with tranquility'. Interestingly, the only reference to Reccared during the period when he was associated on the throne together with Hermenegild comes precisely in the context of the city founded in his honour.

***Recopolis*: Capital, Fortress or Retreat?**

Why, though, was *Recopolis* given a name commemorating the younger of the sons? As the most simple and most plausible hypothesis, it might be envisaged that Leovigild considered it necessary to establish a royal residence for Reccared, bearing in mind that, in the case of a succession, the elder brother, Hermenegild, would inherit the *regnum* directly – while perhaps continuing to rule with his younger brother – and, for this reason, his preferred royal capital would have obviously been Toledo; in this way, the royal residences were duplicated in much the same way as Liuva had held Narbonne and Leovigild had been based in Toledo. By constructing a new city *a fundamentis*, in addition to commemorating military successes, establishing privileges for its inhabitants and providing it with a remarkable array of monuments, Leovigild succeeded in creating a parallel royal seat that did rival Toledo and, consequently, should not cause conflict between his two sons.

Against this, however, is the observation that the two centres were too close to each other and too far from the periphery of the Iberian Peninsula to govern all areas effectively. For this reason, we are inclined to think that *Recopolis* was designed principally as a royal residence for Leovigild's second son, one in touch with the main capital, but with his main administrative centre elsewhere.

In this respect, the hypothesis most frequently defended by historians is one claiming that Leovigild located the new city in *Celtiberia* and *Carpetania* with the aim of converting it into the 'administrative capital and centre of Visigothic domination' in the zone and 'in a position in the rearguard overlooking the recently consolidated *limes* in the east and south-east (of the Iberian Peninsula) against the Byzantines'. This would make it part of the same line of intervention applied in the following year when the king sent his son Hermenegild to Seville to control *Baetica*, to prevent possible uprisings by the great estate-owning aristocracy and, similarly, to defend the frontier against the Byzantines (García Moreno 1989, 121, synthesises these hypotheses).

Without rejecting these opinions, since they are perfectly reasonable, the chronological order in which the 'postings' and 'functions' were given to the royal sons continues to be strange. If the situation in *Celtiberia* required more rapid intervention, and if *Baetica*

had been a mission that had been of greater weight in the following year, one would have expected the first task to have been assigned to Hermenegild and the second allocated to Reccared; or else the two tasks were given to them by their father simultaneously. However, this reflection is obviously mere conjecture for we do not know what actually happened. Nevertheless, there are no grounds for claiming that Reccared was assigned a task that involved him transferring to *Recopolis* or settling in *Celtiberia*, since at no time is it recorded that Reccared moved from Toledo, or was assigned any administrative, political or military mission around this date; nor was Hermenegild, who, as seen, was allocated a city as his residence in order to exercise his rule the next year.

The two princes must have been in Toledo in 578, perhaps awaiting their ‘possible postings’ and future marriages (although the planned marriage of Reccared to Riguntha, another granddaughter of Gosuintha and Athanagild, as she was the daughter of Galsuintha, who in turn was daughter of this couple, and Chilperic of Neustria, was frustrated owing to the climate of tension between the Frankish and Visigothic courts as a consequence of various events, particularly the demise of Hermenegild). For this reason, the naming of *Recopolis* in honour of the younger of the two and not of the first-born is puzzling, there being no need or evidence to contemplate a preference on Leovigild’s part for his second child, since there is no evidence to support such a hypothesis; in fact, the contrary may have been the case, since Hermenegild, as noted, was the first to be given in marriage and assigned an area *ad regnandum*.

A final question might be posed: was there any need to found a city *ex novo* in order to make it the ‘administrative capital’ of *Celtiberia* and not to build any other city as an administrative capital in any other zone? Regardless of that, why should it have been thought necessary for Reccared to establish territorial control in that zone rather than other areas of the Iberian Peninsula? *Gallia Narbonensis* continued to give cause for concern; *Gallaecia* was not yet dominated and, in fact, the Sueves later arrived in support of Hermenegild when he rebelled against his father. We consider that such questions have no clear answer, but they inevitably arise from the previously formulated questions: why found a city in *Celtiberia*, and not elsewhere, and why for the younger son rather than the elder one?

Let us, then, fall back on what we have presented as the *lectio facillior*. Perhaps it was plainly and simply a matter of creating a royal seat for the second son, given that the then capital of the *regnum*, Toledo, would logically have to be the elder brother’s residence in the future. Accordingly, once *Recopolis* had been built, or was at least habitable, and its *palatium* and key infrastructures were available,

Reccared could have transferred there. Having two royal centres in fair proximity would then signify that Leovigild, to judge from his policy of unification in all other respects, was not thinking about a ‘two-headed’ system of power or a division of the *regnum*, but rather about a form of diarchy, in imperial style (of an *augustus* and a *caesar*).

A simpler explanation sees the name of *Recopolis* applied to the city subsequent to these events. The archaeological site that is generally equated with *Recopolis* (see discussion below) has yielded a hoard of *tremisses* of Leovigild, apparently minted in *Recopolis* (see [Figure 6.2](#)). More specifically, the coin hoard was found in the upper stratigraphic levels of the remains of a baptistery identified at the far end of the church from the apse, towards the north; it consisted of a group of 90 gold *tremisses*, among which are several Byzantine coins minted under the Emperors Justinian and Justin II, a number of Merovingian and Suevic coins, and others, the most recent in date, of King Leovigild.

Detailed study of the composition of the hoard (Heiss 1872; Cabré 1946) determines that it was hidden between the years 576 and 578–579, based mainly on dates for the minting of the coins of Leovigild. However, we are moving within a very tight time range and precisely the one in which the events with which we are concerned took place. According to the literary sources, the foundation of *Recopolis* dates to 578 while Hermenegild’s transfer to Seville and rebellion took place in 579. In the first instance, as argued above, Leovigild’s city foundation may have been a demonstration of royal power, in imitation of the Empire; but in view of the events unfolding around Hermenegild, the city, perhaps still undergoing construction and not yet, so to speak, ‘inaugurated’, may have finally been given the name of the loyal son. This name is undoubtedly corroborated by a gold coin, a *triens* preserved in the Cabinet of Antiquities of the Real Academia de la Historia (Madrid), on the obverse of which the legend + *Reccaredus rex* can clearly be read, with a representation of a full-face bust, while on the reverse the legend is: *iu(stus) feci(t)* + *Reccopo(lis)*, also with a full-face bust (Canto García et al. 2002, 102).

This hypothesis of a post-revolt naming naturally depends on the exact date of the minting of the coins in question, but it would explain the chronological sequence of events in a simple way as well as the exclusively propagandistic and ideological aim of the royal foundation, only subsequently named in honour of Reccared.

There is yet another aspect of John of Biclar’s entry that is worthy of consideration and which only archaeology will be able to clarify in the future. It is commonly accepted that *Recopolis* was a foundation *ex novo*. However, hypothetically speaking, there could already have been a settlement, perhaps even an urban centre, which from 578, or shortly beforehand, saw massive investment to endow it with

substantial public buildings to create a seat worthy of a king. This observation is based exclusively on John of Biclar's statement. What he says is that Leovigild founded a city in *Celtiberia* (*Chron.* 50 = a. 578.4): *Et ciuitatem in Celtiberia ex nomine filii condidit, que Recopolim nuncupatur* – which is what Isidore of Seville states in almost exactly the same terms (*HG*, 51): *Condidit etiam ciuitatem in Celtiberia, quam ex nomine filii Recopolim nominauit*. However, John of Biclar's detail in the phrase *quam miro opere in menibus et suburbanis adornans, priuilegia populo noue urbis instituit* requires us to think that either there was already a *populus* settled there, or if there was no previous settlement, and it was constructed *a fundamentis*, a group of people of some size had to be transferred there to inhabit the site; these people were issued *priuilegia*, although we have no idea what these might have consisted of, unless it refers to land allocations.



Figure 6.2 Coin hoard found in the baptistery of the church (Photo: after Olmo 2006)

Yet '*populus*' may have been a more precise term than might be supposed: it might actually have referred to a pre-existing population already at the site. Providing the city with walls, expanding and embellishing its *suburbia*, and in short converting it into a true *vrbs* and *sedes regia* would, without any shadow of doubt, denote a

foundational act. This, along with the issuing of privileges to its inhabitants, would furthermore have established an ideological connection with the old Roman tradition and signify a royal Visigothic imitation of Empire and the exercise of power. This was further reinforced by the provision in the city of its own mint, active under both Leovigild and Reccared.

What became of the city subsequently? If planned as the royal seat for the younger of the two princes, then obviously the events of 579 in connection with Hermenegild, the family split, and the latter's death, rendered this objective obsolete, as Reccared would instead have lived in the capital of the Visigothic *regnum*, *Toletum*. At that date, it is unimaginable that there could have been a change in the location of the capital to a fresh, if smaller city, but one without the traditions and trappings of royal and Church power that Toledo had long since acquired; indeed, Toledo's episcopal see was to become the true ecclesiastical metropolitan see of the *regnum*, and the host for the general Church councils. Indeed, by the later sixth century the city of Toledo was surely more important than its archaeological remains so far let us reconstruct; however, we are convinced that, in the years to come, further excavation and associated studies will provide a new vision and greater knowledge of the Visigothic capital's growth and monumentality.

Nonetheless, we should not think that *Recopolis* automatically became extinct after 579: if planned and activated for Reccared, it would seem extremely unlikely that works of construction would be abandoned. With all the urban infrastructure with which it was endowed, its buildings, and the human and landed investments, at the least it could have functioned as a seasonal palatial residence, for the leisure or rest of the prince/king Reccared, as well as of later monarchs and their entourages – in a fashion not far removed from Hadrian's vast villa at Tivoli in the second century AD. Such a role might partly explain the lack of any special mention in the literary sources and no significant other activity here worthy of record. And such a presumed secondary role would explain also the apparent absence at any stage of an episcopal see at *Recopolis* – though once again, we must support our arguments chiefly on the basis of the silence of the written sources.

Archaeologies of *Recopolis*: Data and Directions

Crucially, of course, the archaeological evidence offers an extra and alternative voice. Although it cannot be unreservedly guaranteed that the remains on top of the Cerro de la Oliva (Zorita de los Canes, Guadalajara), are in fact those of *Recopolis*, their extent should support

this hypothesis for, if these were not of this city, they must represent a city of unknown name of extraordinary significance, provided with structures worthy, it must be insisted, of a royal seat (see [Figure 6.3](#)). But we do have fairly explicit support in the entry by the Arabic chronicler Al-Rasis recording that the castle of Zorita de los Canes was built with stones brought from the ancient ‘Racupel’ or ‘Rocapel’ (Flórez 2002, 17): the proximity between archaeological site and castle make it more than probable that the site is indeed *Recopolis*; this is further corroborated by the noted coin hoard found in the baptistery here.



Figure 6.3

At 650 m above sea level, the site is located on a natural communication route from the Mediterranean coastal region towards the Castilian Meseta or central plateau – a detail which has undoubtedly led to its being considered as a defensive point in the rearguard of Celtiberia – and is skirted by the Tagus River, a location paralleled by that of the city of Toledo and, in general, by many of the old Roman cities constructed on rivers (see [Figure 6.4](#)).

Across the last century various archaeological investigations on the Cerro de la Oliva were undertaken with the aim of defining the characteristics of the city more precisely, but only from the 1980s did excavations take place on a continuous and systematic basis, thanks to the team directed by L. Olmo. Although much more remains to be plotted, surveyed and excavated (only a relatively small part of the site of c. 33 hectares is properly known), the monumental characteristics of the complex so far recognised suggest a truly remarkable urban site. How far it reflects a model typical of sixth- and seventh-century cities, or whether it is instead a quasi-urban prestige enclosure remains a matter for further debate and clarification. There is a series of aspects worthy of mention in connection with this archaeological complex and which should be placed alongside the evidence for the *sedes regia* of *Toletum*. We do not aim here to reconsider or re-evaluate the archaeological evidence for *Recopolis*, but rather to offer a brief summary of the main features and buildings

that support, in our opinion, not just the existence of an important foundation, but also the possibility that it was planned as a royal seat.

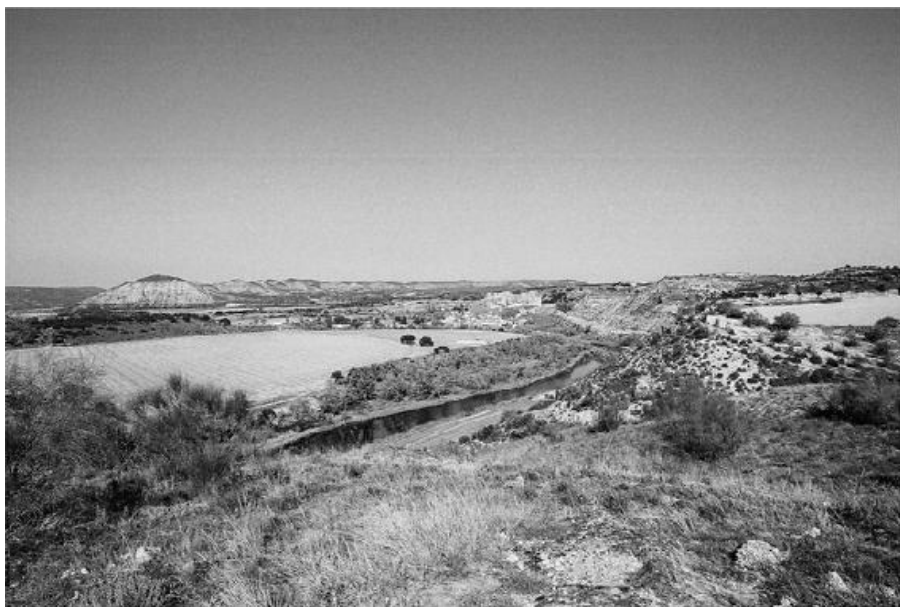


Figure 6.4 *Surroundings of Recopolis, with the Tagus River and the castle of Zorita de los Canes in the background (Photo: fotochicho)*

First to flag are the traces of the city's engineering works and infrastructure. To the east of the urban area, but relatively close, survey work has located the quarries used for extracting stone for building the defences and other buildings; its proximity greatly facilitated transport needs and supply to specific building zones – without denying that the whole site must have resembled a vast building depot for long spells, though we cannot determine easily how quickly all principal works were completed. Hence the discussion above whether the works were well underway before the documented foundation date of 578 and whether this was a re-working of an existing settlement.

One of the most remarkable aspects is undoubtedly the strength of the defences, best preserved on the western side of the site. These were built with two faces of well-cut rectangular blocks laid in regular courses, with an internal rubble filling c. 2.0 m wide, and reinforced at regular distances by rectangular towers, at least eleven of which are known. The techniques employed here closely recall those used in walls in many western Mediterranean cities, but good parallels exist in *Hispania* in the city walls of Barcelona, Puig Rom (Rosas, Gerona) and el Tolmo de Minateda (Albacete). Walls girded the whole 33 ha site

except on its northern side, where a considerable drop of some 60 m made artificial defences unnecessary. So far few city gates have been plotted, and only one has been excavated, in the western part; this access point was flanked by two projecting rectangular towers. These imposing walls not only had the function of formally delimiting and defining the city, but certainly were designed to play a defensive role, implying that there was an anxiety about possible rebel or enemy attacks, for example from the Byzantine enclave. At the same time, these walls might also form exhibits of the symbolic nature of power, even religious power, in defending the spiritual life of the city, in the image of the walls of the Celestial City of Jerusalem.

Regarding the system of hydraulic organisation, enormous efforts will have been required to channel the water supply by means of different constructions and work here was facilitated by the site's proximity to the Tagus River – as occurred also in the case of Toledo. In fact, in the eastern part of the site, a system for channelling and transporting water, partially constructed above ground, has been traced, while at other points the engineers took advantage of hollows in the natural bedrock. These conduits further reveal that surrounding lands were cultivated with crops requiring irrigation. Animal bone analysis meanwhile indicates stock rearing and consumption of sheep, goats and cattle, as well as evidence for hunting (probably not just a royal pastime). These data give a good indication of the viability of a sizeable city with the capacity of being self-sufficient as regards supplies.

The discovery of mooring points dating from this period on the banks of the Tagus lets us recognise the river as a navigable communication route to transport building materials and merchandise, facilitating both long distance trade and more local exchanges with other towns on the Tagus. As occurred at Toledo, overland access was both necessary and of great importance and some of these routes have been identified; more specifically, a road to the north-east, cut directly into the bedrock, was actively used in the medieval period as it connected the Arab castle of Zorita de los Canes with the (former) city (see [Figure 6.5](#)).

The highest part of the hilltop has revealed a series of buildings laid out around an open space (see [Figures 6.6](#) and [6.7](#)). To the north is a large L-shaped building, commonly called the palace; to the east the ecclesiastical building including a baptistery, and, closing this open space to the south, another very long rectangular building. The inhabited area of the city was laid out on terraces taking advantage of the natural slope of the land towards the south. This layout and the extent of the remains endorse the idea of public spaces and buildings of special political function, although it is still not possible to specify

their exact roles.

The ecclesiastical complex (Figure 6.8) is of considerable size and was luxuriously endowed, as shown by the marble column bases and capitals, together with a profusely decorated chancel screen plaque (Figure 6.9). This church of pseudo-basilica plan was 19.3 m long x 8.6 m wide; its projecting apse, externally rectangular and internally semicircular, is preceded by a transept. A *vestibulum* lies before the central nave, and the whole building is surrounded by a gallery.

The baptistery lies to the north, in front of the church; it was in the upper levels of this building that the coin hoard was found (Figure 6.2). The scale and design would overall fit an actual or potential episcopal church, although there is no evidence whatsoever of this function or any record of a resident bishop (though, of course, we cannot exclude visits by bishops to see royalty here). Mention should also be made that the area of the apse underwent substantial modifications in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, making clear interpretation of the different building phases difficult. As regards the dedication of the church to Santa María, all the available documentary references are of later medieval date, and its dedication in the Visigothic period remains unknown.



Figure 6.5 Rock-cut access route to the city (Photo: G. Ripoll)



Figure 6.6 Urban area in the upper part of the city (Photo: A. Alier)

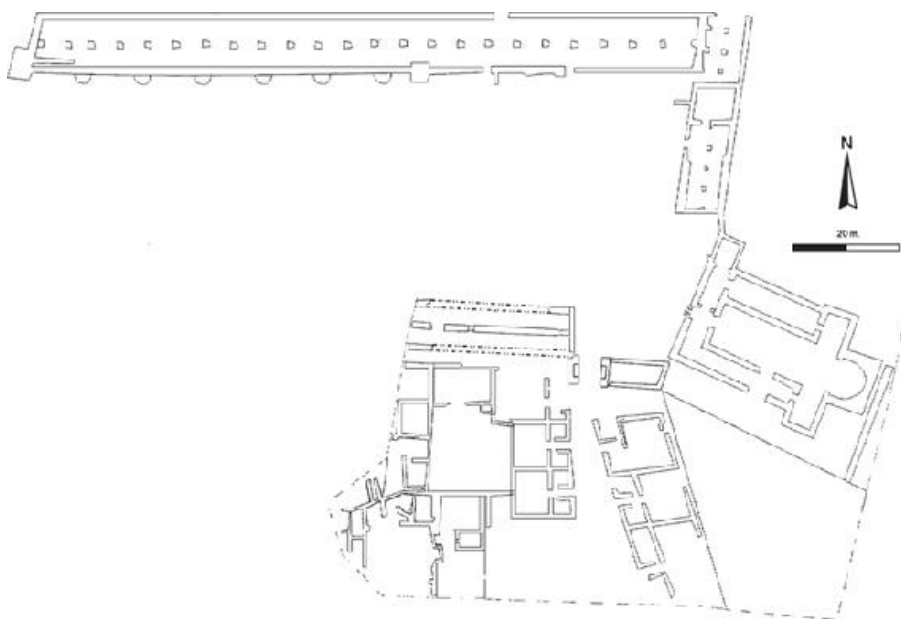


Figure 6.7 Plan of the public area of Recopolis (After L. Olmo)



Figure 6.8 Recopolis: ecclesiastical complex (Photo: C. Siero)

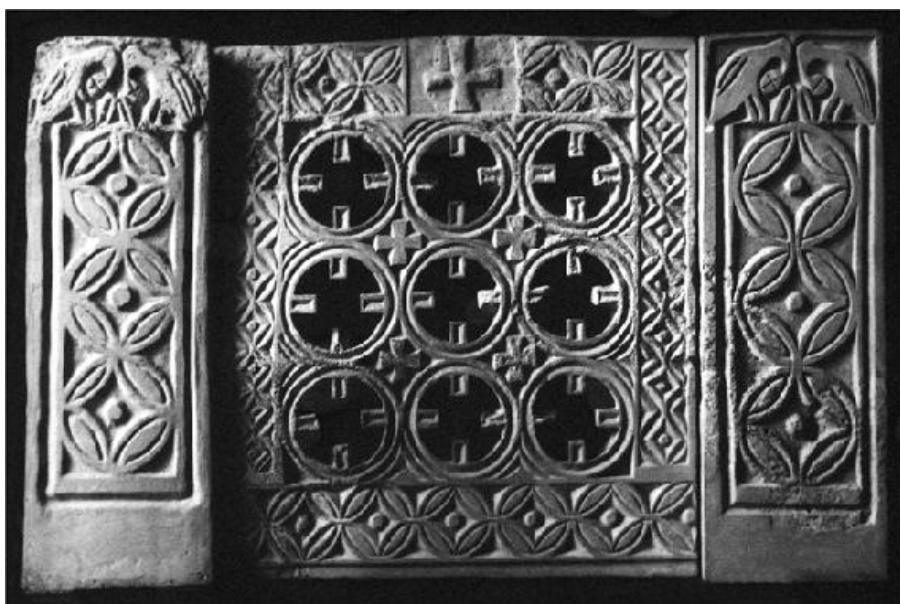


Figure 6.9 Chancel screen found in the church at Recopolis (Photo: MAN)



Figure 6.10 *Dwellings and workshops on the main public street leading to the upper zone at Recopolis (Photo: C. Siero)*

The church directly connects with a single-nave building of enormous dimensions – 135 m long by c. 13.5 m wide – with a series of central pillars that surely supported an upper storey; there are also semicircular buttresses on the outer façade. The scale has led researchers to identify this as a palace, and yet the ornamental and decorative contrast between this extremely sober building and the church must be highlighted. Potentially the upper storey of the ‘palace’ had been the opulent space, but data to confirm this are lacking; the lower level could meanwhile suit a granary or *horreum* or else stables for the royal cavalry. Excavation of a building of comparable nature on the south side of the square has shown that, from the second half of the seventh century, its upper floor – paved with *opus signinum* – was abandoned. This moment coincides with certain modifications to other buildings, which were no longer used for their original function, whether residential, reception or administrative, since these spaces became subdivided or else completely fell out of use.



Figure 6.11

The inhabited area – i.e. ordinary housing – must have been located against the inner face of the defences and, as shown by recent excavations, in the terraced area stretching between the large square, around which the public buildings and the church were laid out, and the south gate (Figures 6.10 and 6.11). These spaces fanned out on both sides of the public way providing access to the public square mentioned above (Figures 6.12 and 6.13 below). Almost all these structures were of rectangular plan and made up of two or three rooms. Their first phases saw usage for artisanal, commercial or storage activities, while in a later stage they became dwellings. Nearly all these buildings were constructed in the same way, making use of stone for the lower parts of the walls and rammed earth or tapia for the upper part. However, it should be borne in mind that excavations as yet only revealed a very small part of the city's considerable extent.

The archaeological finds still do not enable us to clarify with any degree of precision just when the city ceased to be occupied, nor have the ongoing excavations totally clarified the city's urban and architectural development. However, continuity of use is attested under the Umayyad Governors and Amirs in the eighth and early ninth centuries, although we can recognise a slow, gradual transformation at *Recopolis* perhaps as a result of the revolts of the different Berber groups in the region. This process led to the disintegration of the earlier urban layout, with the various sixth- and seventh-century buildings used for habitation until a moment as yet poorly defined in archaeological terms, but nevertheless indicated by collapse and fire. Such stratigraphic levels are particularly clear in the palatine complex. However, in the southern part of the site, where a number of dwellings are located, there seems to have been a certain degree of continued and fairly intense occupation since a number of pits were cut, and it is not possible to talk of destruction or abandonment. Yet the city's occupied space progressively contracted and, finally, a large proportion of the blocks and other worked stones from the city walls and other buildings of *Recopolis* came to be reused in the construction of the nearby Arab castle of Zorita, the earliest

phases of which belong to the first half of the ninth century.



Figure 6.12 Recopolis: Public square (Photo: Sarima)



Figure 6.13 Large built structure around the public square of

Conclusion

The abandonment of some buildings, already from the seventh century, could well reflect the loss of the role that the city was originally planned to have by Leovigild. We can read this in different ways: if founded as the royal residence and the political and administrative seat of his younger son, Reccared, then this formed an alternative *sedes regia* parallel to *Toletum*, the capital of the *regnum* and Leovigild's seat par excellence. Potentially, however, *Recopolis*' foundation (or the transformation of a pre-existing centre) was also for ideological reasons or motives, symbolising the exercising of royal power and commemorating military victories. Alternatively, the site could have simply functioned as a (substantial and impressive) seasonal royal residence for leisure purposes and longer term residence for the royal family or families, if also acting as a venue for state meetings. The archaeology revealed could, in reality, fit all of these alternatives. Either way, what is certain is that *Recopolis* must have constituted a true challenge in terms of town-planning and must be cited as an example of the ability of the Visigothic *regnum* to undertake and fund such major works of statement and display. And although *Recopolis* must have had its moments of (sadly undocumented) glory, its evident decay and loss of function in the course of the seventh century are clear signs of the way that royal power politics were by then being played out elsewhere, and denote a political situation quite different from the one when its construction was begun.

In conclusion, literary texts and archaeological remains seem to suggest that *Recopolis*, though planned to serve as a royal residence, finally lost any real importance and its function was progressively forgotten – *Recopolis* was scarcely remembered as a city, an *vrbs relictā*.

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Explanatory note: the bibliography presented here is selective and merely one for guidance; reference should be made to the most recent publications for the principal studies of the aspects discussed in this chapter.

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¹ We follow the numbering employed in the edition by Cardelle de Hartmann, placing in brackets the numbering according to the year, as set out in the edition by Campos.

Chapter 7

Deciphering ‘Lost’ Urban Landscapes at Cyrene

Gareth Sears, Vince Gaffney, Chris Gaffney, Richard Cuttler, Helen Goodchild and Susan Kane

Introduction

The UNESCO World Heritage city of Cyrene, located in the Cyrenaica region of modern eastern Libya, is a key site for understanding the development of Greek cities from the archaic period into Late Antiquity. It was important on a regional and Mediterranean level and is of exceptional importance for the study of the classical city more widely, both in terms of its standing remains and the large areas of unexcavated urban landscape. Over the past two centuries the multi-focal site has been excavated by a number of Libyan and international teams, mainly without the support of non-invasive investigation or remote sensing and, consequently, the relationship between the excavated and unexcavated portions of the city is poorly understood, as is our appreciation of the form and development of the city itself. Work undertaken by the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity (IAA) of the University of Birmingham, as part of the Cyrenaica Archaeological Project (CAP) in 2006–07 has been designed to move towards an enhanced recognition and assessment of Cyrene’s urban and suburban topography and its evolution and the links between the city and its hinterland, as well as to provide a resource for the management of the UNESCO site of Cyrene by the Libyan Department of Antiquities. The current paper provides a brief overview of the problems and research questions that the CAP project seeks to address and the methodologies applied for these purposes. We will then move on to discussing specific case studies from the research programme to demonstrate how the technological approach can greatly inform the study of the urban topography at long-inhabited sites such as Cyrene.

Cyrene is located 9.5 km from the Mediterranean Sea on the Djebel Akhdar (or Gebel el-Akhdar), the ‘Green Mountain’. The site is a complex one because of the area’s underlying geology and the effect of wadi development. Cyrenaica’s coastal plain near Cyrene is only around 1 km wide, after which there is a line of steep cliffs of around 300 m in height. South of this cliff line is a plateau of 6–8 km in depth, comprising a limestone terrace, covered by red soils, that ends

with another chain of cliffs, again around 300 m in height; Cyrene sits on top of this second line of cliffs. To the south of the city is another plateau, which gently slopes downwards towards the Sahara desert. Cyrene thus sits on a series of terraces. A number of steep wadis, cutting through the limestone plateau, surround the city, meaning that ancient Cyrene is defined by cliffs dropping away towards the lower plateau on the north but also by two wadis, namely the Wadi Bel Gadir and the Wadi Bu Turchia. The former defines the western limits of the city, whilst the latter emerges out of the site itself and its valley splits Cyrene's eastern and western halves, impeding access between the two. These topographic features create distinct physical divisions between areas such as the Upper Town and the Sanctuary of Apollo, effectively creating a multi-focal site and adding to a complex urban history.

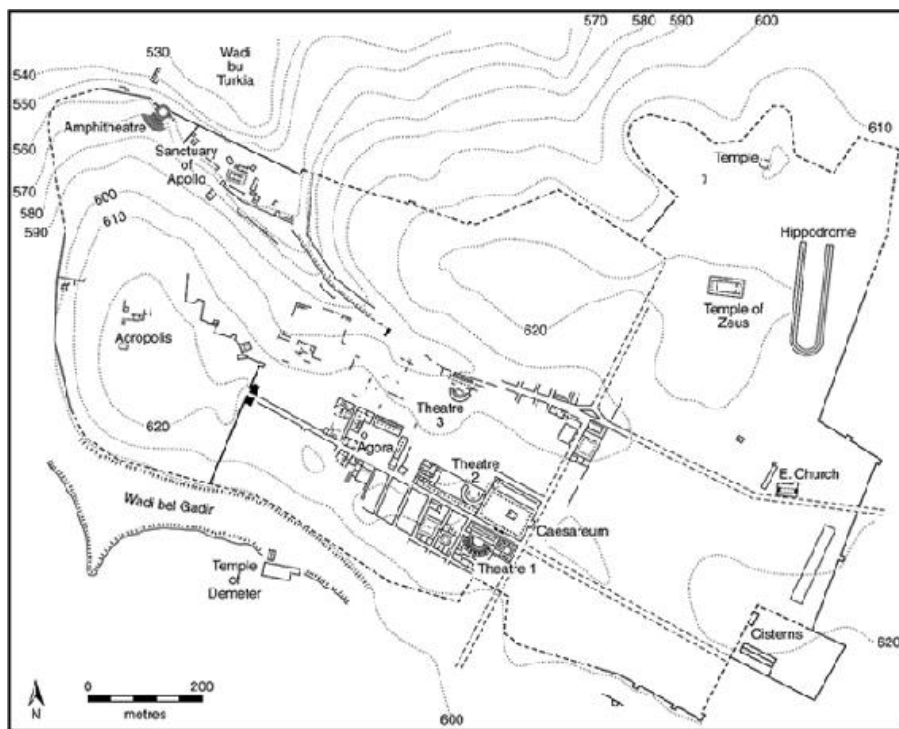


Figure 7.1 Plan of the Hellenistic to early Byzantine city of Cyrene (after White 1984, fig. 1)

The current project emerges from the American Archaeological Mission, directed by Professor Donald White, which conducted excavations at the Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone and a wider survey of remains in the Wadi Bel Gadir (see [Figure 7.1](#)). The results of their work, undertaken between 1969 and 1981, were published in *Libya Antiqua* and the *American Journal of Archaeology* between 1971

and 1977 and, from 1984, a seven-volume final report (White 1971; 1972–73; 1975; 1976; 1976–77; 1981; 1984; 1993). Following the renewal of relations between the United States and Libya in 2004, Professors Donald White and Susan Kane (Oberlin College) met Libyan Department of Antiquities' staff in July 2004 and CAP was granted a licence to begin archaeological work. Subsequently Professor Kane approached the Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity (IAA), University of Birmingham, in October 2004 to join CAP due to the IAA's expertise in remote sensing and 3D imaging. Due to the difficulties of obtaining visas for American team members, the 2006 and 2007 seasons took place without the involvement of American staff. In consequence the IAA, with considerable advice and input from Professors Susan Kane and Sam Carrier of Oberlin College, has undertaken the fieldwork. Some of CAP's 2006 topographical modelling in the Wadi Bel Gadir Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone has already been published in *Libyan Studies* (Kane and White 2007).

Research Context

Cyrene's importance as an ancient, multi-period urban centre is recognised in its status as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Despite the 'World Heritage' brand there are significant threats to research at Cyrene and to the site itself, ones that the current administration of the Department of Antiquities is beginning to face with the help of proposed initiatives such as the Green Mountain Conservation and Development Authority (GMCDA).

The survey work that CAP has undertaken is not only informing research into its urban evolution, indicating the types of structures that are yet to be excavated and filling in the site topography, but it also links in to the need to produce a definitive map of the city of Cyrene because of its UNESCO status. Modern development on the edges of the town of New Shahat is encroaching on the site from the south-east and the UNESCO World Heritage Centre has deemed it crucial to establish a management plan and a buffer zone around ancient Cyrene, not just for heritage management, but also to protect the research agendas of current and future archaeologists and historians (Boccardi 2003; see Thorn 2005, 13–15 for the destruction to the necropoleis).

There are several problems that historians and archaeologists have to navigate when examining the urban history of Cyrene. Cyrene has been a focus of traditional investigation across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (e.g. Ensoli Vittozzi 1992; Bonacasa and Ensoli 2000; Ensoli 2004; Luni 2006). The rich archaeological heritage and a

plethora of unexcavated structures have meant that considerable scope exists for concentrating on relatively small areas of the urban topography, on the necropoleis or burial grounds, or on the conservation of previously excavated material. Given the size of the task of preserving the standing remains, for instance the over twenty-year-long reconstruction of the Temple of Zeus, and a clearly extensive buried archaeological resource that leads to very long-term excavation commitments, it is entirely understandable and important for research into Cyrene that other archaeological missions have focused on their own 'concessions' granted by the Libyan Department of Antiquities (e.g. Bacchielli 1998; 1999, 9–23; Luni 2006). A consequence of the parcelling up of Cyrene into different areas of study has been a general lack of emphasis on the use of remote sensing techniques to produce a comprehensive plan of the city, or to give an indication of the nature and value of the subsurface remains, although the Chieti Mission, for instance, has been using geophysics for several years. The demonstrable value of extensive survey of antique urban centres is clear where the rare opportunities to carry out such research have been taken. An example of such work includes the almost total geophysical survey of the Roman city of Wroxeter in the United Kingdom (Gaffney and Gaffney 2000). In this case, geophysical survey may have doubled the numbers of known structures within the town, filling areas that had previously been empty with buildings or other traces of historic activity (White and Gaffney 2003, table 22.3). The consequent interpretation of the new plan allowed a complete revision of the nature, significance and impact of the town within its regional context (Gaffney et al. 2007). It can be anticipated that the broader and systematic application of similar techniques would help to answer fundamental research questions on the sequence, nature, extent and, indeed, loss of urbanisation and create an important resource for the management of Cyrene's archaeological heritage.

An improved plan of Cyrene that maps more of the sub-surface remains is of crucial importance given the various threats to the city. Although the excavated monuments in the heart of the archaeological park are protected by law and by the efforts of the Department of Antiquity based within the archaeological zone, such is the diversity and extent of the city and its necropoleis that it is impossible for the Department to prevent all damage to Cyrene and its environs and to maintain and conserve all structures and areas. Until the twentieth century, encroachment on the abandoned site by housing and other buildings had been relatively light (see [Figures 7.2](#) and [7.3](#)). In the last couple of decades the ancient city has been threatened by the expansion of the town of New Shahat and the clearance of tombs and

other remains to create larger agricultural spaces. The greatest impact has not been felt so much in the excavated, touristvisited portions of the Upper Town and around the Sanctuary of Apollo. There are still relatively few tourists at the site and these areas can be easily controlled by the Department of Antiquities as they are fenced off and clearly part of the archaeological zone (Boccardi 2003, Section 69). The problem is that the edges of the ancient city are not clearly defined, particularly to the south and east, so that the area that needs protecting is diffuse and requires much greater precision. Parts of the southern necropolis and New Shahat are in fact contiguous and, although the Department of Antiquities have had some success in protecting some tombs in the area, others have clearly been destroyed or built over by homes, businesses, industry and agriculture (Boccardi 2003, 68); even a local hotel is constructed over tombs which are used as a dining room. In response to the threat to the site of Cyrene posed by New Shahat there is a plan to build Janoub Shahat (South Shahat) to the south of New Shahat and to stop all new building in New Shahat; how effective this measure will be in preventing damage to the site and particularly the necropoleis remains to be seen. As well as the dangers of urban encroachment and agricultural clearance there is also the threat of theft from storerooms, the museum and the wider archaeological site for sale to the international antiquities market (Rose 2001). For instance, the storerooms of the American Mission were broken into in 1999/2000 with several marble statue heads being stolen, only some of which were recovered (Rose 2001; Thorn 2005, 13).

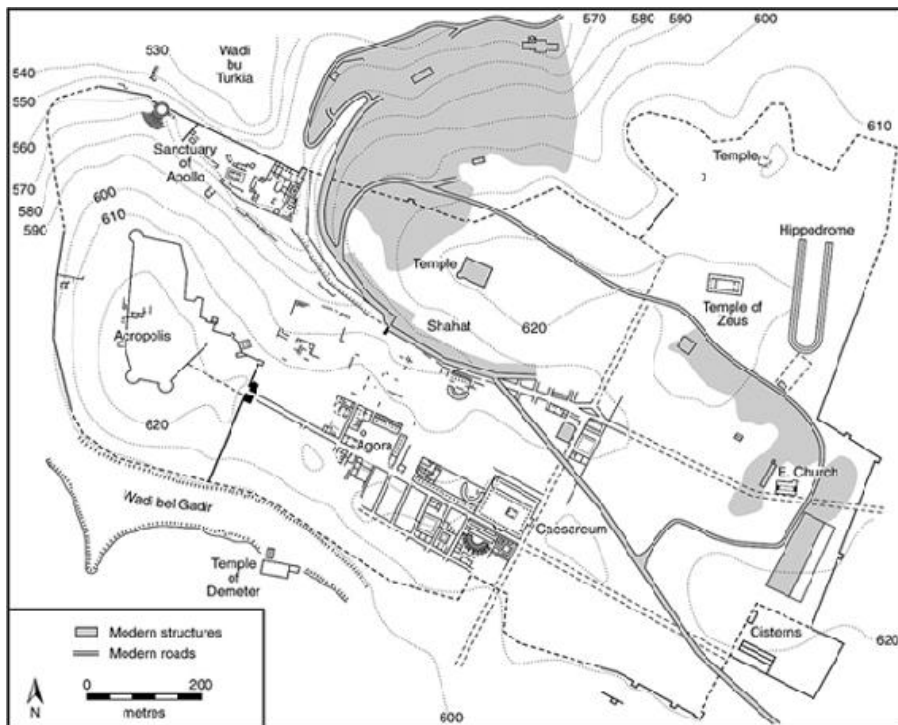


Figure 7.2 Plan of ancient Cyrene, showing modern encroachment onto the remains (After White 1984, fig. 1)



Figure 7.3 A view from the acropolis south-east across the Wadi Bel Gadir towards New Shahat on the skyline. The Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone is on the middle right and columns of the restored Archaic temple to Demeter can be made out in the middle centre (Photo: Gareth Sears).

Unsurprisingly, given the importance of Cyrene in antiquity and given the level of twentieth-century excavations here there is a vast and growing literature on the city and its necropoleis. It is not our aim here to provide a conspectus of all work on the city but rather to indicate areas where the project can contribute to new (and old) research on Cyrene (for an up-to-date collection of recent research on the city, see Luni 2006). Many studies of Cyrene over the last century have naturally enough concentrated on specific eras of Cyrene's history or individual monuments. For instance, the classical Greek through to mid-Roman imperial periods are very well understood, not least because the bulk of the monuments and inscriptions date to these eras. There is perhaps less understanding of the later periods because the long-standing fixation of early researchers with the monuments of the classical era frequently led to the removal of post-classical layers and structures to access more privileged material of earlier periods (see Stucchi 1967 for the removal of post-classical layers). For instance, Stucchi's magisterial work on Cyrenaica's architecture has a long section on the late antique period, but relatively little of the chapter is focused on Cyrene itself due to a relative lack of knowledge about the city's later history (Stucchi 1975, 357–544). Individual excavation reports on monuments also have sections, albeit sometimes limited, on the late antique phases (see for instance the reports on the city's agora – Stucchi 1965, 250–346; Stucchi and Bacchielli 1983: 111–18; Purcaro 2000, 103–4; Bacchielli 2000, 183–92). In the last few decades more work has been undertaken on late antique Cyrene, for instance Ensoli's work on the Sanctuary of Isis and Serapis on the Acropolis (e.g. Ensoli Vittozzi 1992; Ensoli 2004; Del Moro 2006). However, Cyrene and Cyrenaica still have a tendency to be ignored in synthetic histories of the later Roman Empire and Late Antiquity. For instance the *Cambridge Ancient History Volume 14: Late Antiquity* had chapters on most regions of the former Empire but Cyrenaica was virtually ignored, whilst Wickham left the region out from his *Framing the Early Middle Ages* because: 'it seemed to me that the information available for them [Scotland, Bavaria and Cyrenaica] had parallels elsewhere' (Cameron et al. 2000; Wickham 2005, 6, n.6; the same is largely true for Potter 2004 and Mitchell 2007). This is not a criticism of those books – it is impossible after all to include every region of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa in comprehensive analytical detail in such works – but an attempt to highlight that Cyrenaica's

peripheral, and sometimes marginal, nature can make the region obscure in analyses of Late Antiquity.

Other sites in the region active in Late Antiquity such as Sousa (formerly Apollonia) and Ptolemais, have been explored in more detail than Cyrene's late phases. Nonetheless, Goodchild did work on the Byzantine and later periods from both a historical and archaeological perspective and demonstrated the evolution in various of the buildings of Cyrene as well as assessing the Arab conquest and the apparent lack of resistance to it (Goodchild 1963 44–5; Goodchild 1967); Ward-Perkins also sought to clarify the later stages to some of the public monuments (notably the theatre complex – Ward-Perkins and Gibson 1987). There has been some concentration on 'Christian archaeology' in Cyrenaica (e.g. Ward-Perkins et al. 2005; Bonacasa Carra and Scirè 2009), which has flagged the potential of these monuments, but often the work has de-contextualised these religious monuments from the rest of the urban agglomeration, not least because of the lack of knowledge of the context. Consequently Cyrene's basilicas have been cleared and studied and some of what appears to be late antique damage to temples has been ascribed to Christian action (e.g. Roques 1987, 321). More recent work, for instance Ensoli Vitozzi (1992) on the Temple of Isis, continues to shed light on aspects of Late Antiquity. At present it is generally thought, based on excavation of sites such as the Wadi Bel Gadir Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone and the examination of historical material such as the letters of Synesius of Cyrene, that the city declined slowly from the late third century AD onwards and that in the Arab era, from the later seventh century onwards, the city became largely abandoned (Goodchild 1971, 24–31; Stucchi 1975, 357; Cuttler et al. 2007, 21–3). However, fuller and more co-ordinated work on Cyrene's evolution into the Byzantine and Arab periods in particular is essential for a full appreciation of the city's later developments and its changing status and human and materials contents. The detailed geophysical investigation and assessment of the site by CAP can provide information about the subsurface remains, privileging the most substantial (i.e. well-preserved) material whatever its period. This will hopefully provide a means to correct earlier trends and allow future archaeological research to be carried out on all existing material rather than just the surviving classical monuments.

The threats and omissions addressed above demonstrate the importance of research activity that produces an accurate and detailed map of the unexcavated city. Without such a plan and without a better understanding of the subsurface remains, fundamental research questions may never be answerable due to the ongoing destruction of the archaeological heritage. As such, it is crucial that the recording of

the subsurface remains of Cyrene and the digital recording of the standing remains are undertaken. Proper geophysical exploration and 3D laser-scanning, both tied to topographical modelling, are therefore essential tools in a proper large-scale research programme at the city. Without this, it will be impossible to properly assess the extent of the city and in particular where its boundaries lay; the relationship between the urban area and the suburban sanctuaries; the relationship between the city and its rural hinterland; the relationship and nature of the whole street grid and the buildings that occupied it; and the relationship, and in particular the view-sheds, between individual monumental buildings, between public buildings and housing, and between buildings and the natural environment. If geophysical exploration of the site can be tied to excavated data, there is considerable scope to interrogate site and plan evolution, growth, shrinkage and change across Cyrene's history.

Two seasons were undertaken which can be briefly summarised before discussing both methods and results:

(i) CAP 2006 Season

The 2006 season was focused on the Wadi Bel Gadir Sanctuary of Demeter and Persephone in order to contribute to Kane and White's continued research into the sanctuary and its relationship to other religious structures on the south bank of the Wadi (Kane and White 2007). The IAA team, in conjunction with the Department of Antiquities and the Department of Archaeology at Omer el-Mukhtar, therefore produced a topographical model of the Wadi Bel Gadir sanctuary using a differential Global Positioning System (GPS) (Cuttler et al. 2006). The model accurately maps the sanctuary and its surroundings in the CAP concession area to an accuracy of up to 2 mm and will be the focus of future publication. All of the results were then incorporated into a Geographic Information System (GIS) database.

(ii) CAP 2007 Season

In addition to creating a topographical model of the American excavations, the aim of the 2006 season had been to assess the potential of the city and the territory for remote sensing fieldwork as well as to establish the contacts necessary for productive future work. Thus in 2007, a CAP team returned to undertake the primary objectives of geophysical survey through extensive magnetometry and 3D laser-scanning on selected standing remains. These tasks were carried out in late June 2007 and the data captured were incorporated into the GIS activated in 2005 (Cuttler et al. 2006; 2007). In addition the CAP team carried out a brief assessment of the geomorphology of

Cyrene and the surrounding area and of the potential for palaeoenvironmental examination of soils from the classical period (Cuttler et al. 2007). It is the magnetometry and its results that are the key elements of discussion in this paper.

Methodology

Given the importance of the research questions and the growing threats to the archaeological heritage, the project is a timely and essential assessment of Cyrene's urban area. These investigations into the city's standing and subsurface remains will aid understanding of Cyrenaica's development in antiquity and provide better information regarding the city's plan, structures and survivals. The survey techniques chosen were informed by the experience of members of the team in geophysical survey in Britain and the Mediterranean (Gaffney et al. 2000; 2004; 2008, 153 – see the latter for more technical detail than is published here). Given that the enhanced magnetic soils of ancient towns creates contrasts between archaeological features and their surroundings, resulting in magnetic anomalies in the Earth's magnetic field, the fluxgate magnetometer was the preferred instrument for geophysical survey at Cyrene. The collection of a dense network of magnetometer readings can map the deviations ('anomalies') in the Earth's magnetic field, which is then interpreted by a specialist to produce an interpreted map of the subsurface remains.

The city's topography made it very difficult to use a traditional fluxgate magnetometer system. In a research strategy utilising a traditional system a grid needs to be laid out in advance of any readings being taken and samples are often collected two to four times per metre on traverses a metre apart (ibid., 151–2). The steeply sloping nature of some of the spaces and sites at Cyrene, coupled with the presence of standing remains and the difficult low-level scrub vegetation, all of which combine to restrict access at the site, meant that the decision was taken to use a different approach following the CAP 2006 season, as a regular grid would be very difficult to place and adhere to. Instead it was decided to investigate the use of the Foerster Ferrex © 4.032 magnetometer system, as the integrated GPS technology does not require a grid to be laid out in advance of the survey (see [Figure 7.4](#)). The CAP team field-tested the Foerster magnetometer in late 2006 to determine its suitability for work on ancient sites. The tests were carried out at the Roman city of Wroxeter in the UK because of comparative data available from previous magnetic surveys and because the nature of the results were likely to be in the same range as any work carried out at Cyrene. The results

produced by the Foerster magnetometer were similar to those produced by earlier magnetic surveys at Wroxeter and, in consequence, it was decided the technology would be suited for use at Cyrene (Gaffney et al. 2000; Gaffney et al. 2008, 154). It is worth highlighting that the Foerster magnetometer's application to archaeology is in its infancy and the CAP 2007 season was the first time that it had been used in North Africa. The 2007 season was therefore a pilot to see whether the equipment could cope with the rigours of $>30^{\circ}$ Celsius heat on a daily basis and whether it would be sturdy enough to cope with the low-lying dense vegetation and occasional surface rubble found across much of Cyrene.

Several further factors in fact made the use of the Foerster at Cyrene extremely attractive. First, unlike most traditional magnetometer arrays, the Foerster has three probes, mounted on the system half a metre apart, meaning that more densely acquired data can be collected in one pass. Second, the sensors are preset, reducing the time required for set up (Gaffney et al. 2008, 152; Bartington and Chapman 2004). Third, since the sensors are mounted on a non-magnetic cart, this increases manoeuvrability around the terrain, ensures a constant height for the sensors and reduces operator fatigue. Finally, the position of the sensors is located using an integrated real time differential GPS, which means that a grid is not required – a major advance over traditional systems (Gaffney et al. 2008, 154–5) – and the high degree of accuracy that GPS provides compared to a normal grid means that the data should require less processing. Alongside the benefits that the integration of magnetometer and GPS provides in terms of rates of data collection there are very real benefits to be gained in the visualisation of the data and therefore the research that can be carried out on the interpretation: data can be presented as standard two-dimensional plans of the surveyed areas but, additionally, can be laid over a topographic model of the terrain which is collected using the GPS and at the same time as the magnetometer survey. This feature of the Foerster magnetometer effectively allows the survey data to be more easily placed into its wider, urban context. For a site such as Cyrene with a highly complex underlying topography (given the longevity of site activity), the relationship of the buildings to each other, with all its implications for quotidian movement around the city, movement between sanctuaries including religious processions and movement between the city and its hinterland, can only be fully understood when the landscape is taken into account. The three-dimensional nature of the topographical model, with terrain fundamentally related to the flat plans, will allow questions regarding city development and the implications of the construction of individual buildings to be more fully answered than

could have been achieved with traditional magnetometer systems.

There were several research factors, as well as practicalities, that informed the decisions that CAP, in consultation with Dr Abdulkhader el-Muzeine (Controller of the Department of Antiquities at Shahat at the time), made about which areas were to be surveyed. First, several areas around the periphery of Cyrene – around the Temple of Zeus and the football pitches on the edge of Shahat – were chosen for investigation in order to better understand how built-up these areas were as well as to explore the relationship between the city and its hinterland. Areas to the north and west of the agora in the Upper Town were also examined, since their location places them near the heart of the city and close to major structures such as the agora and its temples, theatres, and the Caesareum (Figure 7.1). Those areas north of the agora clearly lay on important routes between the Upper Town to the ‘Valley Street’ area and from there to the Sanctuary of Apollo, in all likelihood giving it very high prominence in the daily life and rituals of the ancient town. Finally, the acropolis was also surveyed, as this area especially will have contained important religious and political structures in antiquity, especially given its elevated setting providing excellent views of the rest of the city, the middle plateau and the coast (Goodchild 1963, 52–3). Some of the acropolis has been excavated at different periods. The 1910 American Mission excavated a large Hellenistic colonnaded building on the summit and became aware of other structures that remained unexcavated whilst Ensoli Vittozzi has excavated the Temple of the Alexandrian Gods on the northern flank of the hill (Norton et al. 1911, 148–56; Ensoli Vittozzi 1992). The remains of the former are now fragmentary partly because of Italian occupation era fortifications and associated floor levels. Although archaeological considerations were key to the research design of the project, practical considerations also had to be accommodated: some areas of the terracing around the Upper Town and the acropolis were simply too steep to be safely investigated; and since the scrub vegetation of the site is an impediment to survey, CAP arranged for areas on the acropolis to be cleared of vegetation in advance of the survey. Other areas were relatively free of vegetation, however, and one can note how the cultivated fields near the Temple of Zeus made for perfect conditions for survey work. Finally, the CAP survey necessarily avoided heavily forested areas sited around the modern road out of new Shahat to the north and east of the Caesareum (Figure 7.2) that would obscure the signal from the GPS satellites.



Figure 7.4

The work took place between 18 and 29 June 2007, over ten work-days; one full day was used for testing of the machine once it was assembled on site. A GPS base station was placed on high ground near the terrain to be surveyed and away from tall vegetation and large standing remains that could block the GPS signal. The base station logs data from the GPS satellite array and broadcasts real time corrections to the SR530 rover attached to the magnetometer (Cuttler et al. 2007; Gaffney et al. 2008). Unlike a traditional grid-based system, which requires a surveyed grid to be laid out before survey, the Foerster magnetometer system requires a notional rectangular block, defined by a baseline, with its ends located in the field being surveyed. As can be seen from [Figure 7.5](#), each of the areas surveyed were effectively made up of several different rectangular blocks, which need not be on the same orientation (Cuttler et al. 2007; Gaffney et al. 2008, 152). Each block was sampled with traverses set 0.5 m apart, the magnetometer effectively measuring a swathe 1.5 m in width (see above), with readings taken at 10 cm intervals along each traverse. Two data-sets of information were acquired from the GPS (Gaffney et al. 2008, 152): one stream of data was used to guide the cart along the centre of the notional planned path on a straight line in order to cover as much terrain as fully as possible; the second set of data located the actual position of the cart and, hence, the magnetometer's sensors. The capture of the second data-set is one of the key reasons for the use of this type of magnetometer in the project, because it allows for greater flexibility during the survey. A three-person team was used to undertake the work at Cyrene: a magnetometer operator, a GPS specialist, and a member of the Department of Antiquities to oversee the work and to help keep the survey within notional grids.

To sum up the methodology, the decision to use the Foerster magnetometer and the methodologies employed during its use in the field were conditioned by the quality of the data, the rate of capture and the sophisticated presentation of data that the hardware and associated software could provide. Below we outline the principal

results and their implication for further study and understanding of classical Cyrene.

Results

The survey work produced considerable quantities of digital data which enabled plans to be drawn up of seven areas in and around ancient Cyrene: to the north of the Temple of Zeus; on Shahat's football pitches on the city's eastern edge; on the top of the acropolis; two areas on the northern flanks of the acropolis; to the north of the agora; and to the west of the agora. Most of the sectors investigated have revealed several unexcavated buildings, parts of the street grid and dumps of fired or ferrous material, which could be associated with building material (bricks and tiles), pottery or iron. Below we focus on the results produced at two of these sites – Area 5 and Area 6 – in order to demonstrate the nature of the work and the types of information and then interpretation that can be drawn from the acquired data.

(i) North of the Temple of Zeus (Area 6)

The area to the north-east of the Temple of Zeus and north-west of the hippodrome (designated Area 6) was a key zone of study given its location near to several important structures as well as on the apparent periphery of the city and a general lack of certainty regarding the road network and buildings in the area. [Figure 7.5](#) shows part of the resulting plot with buildings and a street highlighted, while [Figure 7.6](#) demonstrates the collected two-dimensional magnetometry data overlaid onto a Digital Elevation Model (DEM). The gaps between the surveyed terrain are due to either difficult topography or vegetation. The potential of the Foerster magnetometer for the visualisation of topography and sub-surface remains is clear from these figures. Importantly the DEM indicates the relationship between the land surface and the built environment. In a relatively small area like this the full benefits of such methods of data presentation are not fully achieved but further, larger scale work might illuminate the relationship between the contours of the land and the way that the road network and *insulae* (or building plots) have been laid out. The mound towards the top of [Figure 7.6](#) is a discrete hillock, which retains the remains of an unexcavated temple (c. 20 x 10 metres) of unknown dedication. However, the temple, like the acropolis and other sites in the Pentapolis such as Balagrae, has suffered from the imposition of Italian military fortifications during the occupation, some of which still survive, causing considerable interference with the subsurface remains (see Goodchild 1963, 74;

Wright 1992, 48). As should be expected from the rest of the known street grid, [Figure 7.6](#) appears to demonstrate that the roads do not follow the site topography; instead a straight, roughly W-E street, which does not follow the ground contours, cuts across the lie of the land (Gaffney et al. 2008, 154–5). The data also demonstrate *insulae* alongside what appear to be roads and a series of pits, which apparently hold considerable ferrous material to the south of the temple mound. Given the size of the pits and their location next to the Italian gun-battery emplacement, it is probable that they are caused by depositions of modern ordnance material (ibid., 155). The clarity of the images derived from the magnetometry data could be due either to the use of the plots across an extended period of time or because buildings were only briefly used with few alterations to the original plan.

The magnetometry data meanwhile have also indicated that earlier plans of the city are not, unsurprisingly, entirely accurate. The structures and road network located by us appear to cut across the streets indicated on some plans of the city, although this may be a problem of rectifying the plan with the actual terrain rather than the known and hypothesised street-grid and the actual subsurface remains in this area being on different alignments. In any case the results clearly testify to how the survey can confirm or replace current interpretations of the city's street-grid and demonstrate the high importance of the CAP project for deciphering more fully Cyrene's urban topography.



Figure 7.5 Plan of part of Area 6 showing buildings and a street highlighted

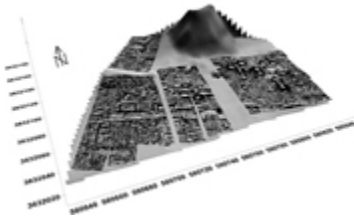


Figure 7.6

(ii) North of the Agora (Area 5)

Area 5 occupies one of two *insulae* immediately to the north of the agora and to the south and west of the central theatre (Sear 2006, 292) (Figure 7.7). It is clear from the plans produced by previous excavations that limited indications of walls had already been seen: for example, Goodchild’s map of 1967 shows the traces of the outside of walls apparently demarcating an *insula*. But the new work makes clear the extent of the structures and provides scope to assess something of their importance in the study of the evolution and function of structures in Cyrene’s Upper Town in particular but also the city more generally (White 1984, fig. 1).

The quality of results gained from the magnetometer survey in Area 5 was striking: the clear readings of walls suggest buildings of considerable size (c. 4,000 m²) with large ferrous deposits, particularly in the north-east of the area, perhaps suggestive of dumps of occupation or even destruction deposits (Figures 7.8 and 7.9). The strength and clarity of the readings could be interpreted in several different ways, many of which would seem to indicate the importance of the structures. First, these results could point to continuity of the building over a long period of time and a lack of substantial demolition and changes to the structure (see below). Yet the strong readings need not be the product of an unchanged urban history; indeed over a thousand years of Cyrene’s existence some evolution, even if the buildings retained their original function (feasible perhaps if they were religious in nature), is extremely likely, and our magnetometer survey plots could have been produced even if substantial remodelling had taken place. Furthermore, any earlier buildings in the space could also have been relatively insubstantial and have not left material that would be located by magnetometry. Simultaneously, and/or alternatively, the area might have been completely cleared of earlier structures during substantial building work. The latter hypothesis in particular would imply the marshalling of considerable resources in order to achieve a full-scale remodelling of the area. Excavation in the House of Jason Magnus some distance

to the south-east of the agora, for instance, suggested occupation throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods whilst the agora area itself was developed from the beginning of the colony to the late antique period (Stucchi 1965; Mingazzini 1966, 95). Given Area 5's proximity to the agora we might expect it to follow more closely that complex's history rather than that of the House of Jason Magnus but excavation would be necessary to confirm any of these hypotheses and to provide coherent chronological pegs regarding longevity of structural usage.



Figure 7.7 *Cyrene: Agora with surveyed areas*

Without further work, especially excavation, it is extremely difficult to identify a function or date for this building(s), although its size and location and therefore its/their likely importance, at least in the conceptions of the city's inhabitants, must be noted. The apparent size theoretically suggests an official or public character: its location and size (if one single construction) might denote a market complex, but we cannot exclude a substantial domestic residence or residences (*domus*). MacDonald, when discussing the architecture of Cyrene, points to the way that monumental Roman structures of all types were duplicated and 'proliferated from one gate to another', as at all Roman cities, and the existence of the agora nearby does not preclude the construction of additional shopping space in the locality (1986, 133). The lack of a date range makes comparison with other structures difficult (as it is hard to know what we should be comparing with), but Greek and Roman cities featured various building types in *insulae* adjacent to the agora/forum and, although some excavated sites such as Priene, Olynthus and Pompeii mainly had official or public

buildings nearby, they also had houses and temples in close proximity (see, for example, Cahill 2002, 265–6; Zanker 1998, 53–60, noting how Hellenistic Pompeii had houses immediately behind the *tabernae* that faced onto the forum; cf. Laurence 2007, 20–22).

(iii) Discerning Movement and Space in the Urban Area

There are a variety of modern theoretical constructions that could help us to understand the importance of any building located in this area whatever its exact use. For instance, MacDonald's work (1986) on major, monumental routes through Roman cities has demonstrated the significance of the 'armature' in the way that cities were organised spatially and mentally. MacDonald defines armatures as networks that 'consist of main streets, squares, and essential public buildings linked together across cities and towns from gate to gate, with junctions and entranceways prominently articulated' (ibid., 1). The present state of knowledge about the building(s) in Area 5 does not allow us to categorise it as part of a key armature of the ancient city, despite its location, in the way that the 'Sacred Way' leading into the Sanctuary of Apollo from the eastern part of the city or the Battos Street that led from the city gates, past the gymnasium/Roman forum, to the agora and on to the acropolis clearly were (Goodchild 1963, 44). Those streets were framed with multiple monumental buildings, propylaea, and in the latter case a stoa decorated with busts of Hermes and Hercules. They were clearly meant to showcase the city, to emphasise the generosity of benefactors or the munificence of the city, and to reiterate the social order, to travellers and citizens alike. This sense of monumentality was emphasised for the Roman period when propylaea were built across Battos Street next to the Caesareum and the agora preventing commercial traffic from travelling along it (ibid., 44).

A valid route to assessing the status and place of the Area 5 building(s) is to turn to Lynch's reconstruction of the ways that inhabitants might have perceived and organised the city and to pursue his categorisation of urban elements. Lynch (1960, 47–8) divides key localities and ways through the city into five different types of structure: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Two of these, districts and edges, need not be discussed here as they are more concerned with neighbourhoods and their perception. 'Nodes' are the strategic foci of the town into which inhabitants and visitors can enter (ibid., 72–8). The agora was clearly one such major node in the Upper Town to which associated and nearby buildings, such as those of Area 5, were subordinated. The importance of the agora as a destination could indeed have eclipsed all nearby structures. In some ways 'paths' are the most easily definable of Lynch's five structures (ibid., 54–61).

Everyone knows what a path essentially does, but Lynch also stresses that paths have directionality as well as providing routes along which people move. MacDonald's armatures tie into these paths: the buildings along these (which can also be seen as Lynch's 'landmarks'), by which people navigate and move around the city, are the articulating points of the armature (ibid., 79–83).



Figure 7.8 Part of 'Area 5' showing large building with courtyard



Figure 7.9 Part of 'Area 5' looking north from agora to the theatre (columns at middle right)

Employing these theoretical considerations, how much does our

mystery structure fit? As has been noted above, Area 5 lay near the ancient city's monumental heart, between the agora, the 'market' theatre in the central quarter, the Severan monument and the 'theatre' west of the gymnasium/Caesareum, as well as considerable unexcavated areas. (The exact nature of the latter 'theatre' is debated with odeon, theatre, bouleuterion and a meeting place for the pan-Cyrenaican boule all being proposed – see Goodchild 1963, 44; Stucchi 1967, 96–102; Stucchi 1975, 289–90; Sear 2006, 292.) If the network of streets was as uniform as it appears, roads from the agora towards the Sanctuary of Apollo, the residential areas on the slopes of the acropolis/Upper Town hill and to 'Valley Street', would clearly have passed by Area 5. Its proximity to one of the agora's entrances makes it likely that it was on an extremely important route through the city, although Cyrene's complicated topography, and the lack of knowledge about some parts of the street network, make it difficult to be certain as to what the best paths through the city in some directions would have been. Nonetheless, the location makes it highly likely that there would have been a regular flow of travellers passing by to access the governmental, religious and business functions maintained in the agora or leaving the Upper Town and heading towards the Sanctuary of Apollo and all its associated shrines and temples. Given the concentration of religious structures in and around the agora and the importance of performance and processional ritual in many, but not all, Greek cults, some of which were maintained into the Roman period when new ones also developed (for instance: the sacred way constructed by Battos which carried processions to the Sanctuary of Apollo at Cyrene – Schol. Pind. *Pyth.* V, 124c, Callot 1999, 54; the Eleusinian Mysteries; the *Lex Sacra* of the Asklepieion of Pergamon and processions along the *Via Sacra* at Ephesos; Petsalis-Diomidis 2005, 203–4; Gebhard 1993, 121–3; Knibbe 1994, 142–4), we can also envisage the regular congregation of adherents of 'official' city cults either processing or moving to the agora as part of ritual movement throughout the town.

Although there is little detailed contemporary comment on Cyrene's classical urban topography, one alleged description of a cultic procession at Cyrene in the Hellenistic period does exist: Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter* (first half of the third century BC). Even if the poem is not a depiction of reality but likely a composite, fictional or hypothetical procession, it helps to demonstrate the importance attached to ritual movement through Greek cities (Callimachus, *Cer.*). Significantly, Callimachus was a native of Cyrene, though he spent much of his life studying at Athens and then at court in Alexandria. Some scholars consider the *Hymn to Demeter* as describing a procession in honour of the goddess from the territory of a city to its agora (and

indeed vice versa – see White 1984, 13–14, 18, for a discussion of the evolution of thought on this matter). In some ways it is less important that Callimachus' poem describes a 'real' procession at the city than that a Greek conceptualised a city and movement through it in this way and emphasised the importance attached to the agora in the religious framework of cult. Quite probably Callimachus' work was informed by his experiences and observations of cultic processions and ceremonies in Cyrene, Athens and Alexandria. Movement through the city by initiates is invoked in the hymn, and it is coupled with the gaze of a watching population, but sadly there is no real topographical evidence in the poem to tie it to Cyrene (Callimachus, *Cer.* 1–7, 120–33; Callot 1999, 56; Hopkinson 1984, 38 argues that 'there is not a scrap of real evidence to show that Cyrene is the setting'; Cameron 1995, 9 argues that the hymn could have been performed at a festival but makes no claims about the 'reality' of the topographical details). Even if there had been, our understanding of movement around the city for such a procession would be further complicated as the exact nature of the temple(s) of Demeter in the Wadi Bel Gadir region is still a matter of debate; and even if Callimachus' work is a direct attestation of Cyrene's cult, the precise exits from the city to access the suburban sanctuary are not entirely clear (see White 1984, 12–19; Luni 2001; Kane and White 2007). Routes down the sets of stairs from the Upper Town into the wadi valley and across one or more bridges are possible, but so too is a route via the head of the valley and the road to Balagrae.

In summary, our magnetometry work on Area 5 indicates considerable structural remains in an important part of the urban centre and conceivably the structure(s) here formed a key part of individuals' and groups' (both resident and visiting) conceptual, mental maps of the city, although of course the strength of that image is hard to assess without a fuller picture of the types of buildings that were located there. Applying the theories of MacDonald and Lynch on urban organisation can only take us so far in the absence of hard information, and written evidence is not forthcoming in providing much topographic detail about the city. Herodotus' description of Cyrene's history tells us virtually nothing about the city itself (Herodotus *Historia* 4, 150–205) and Pindar mentions the tombs of the kings but nothing more (Pindar *Pythian* 5, Stanza 3 and Turn 3; Nisetich 1980: 189). Excavation will be needed to provide substance to this socio-topographic reconstruction of part of ancient Cyrene.

Conclusions and Future Plans

The survey work on the Upper Town of Cyrene has shown the

potential of remote sensing to answer fundamental research questions regarding the extent and nature of the built urban environment. It has demonstrated that it can produce high-quality sub-surface imaging of Cyrene's remains in difficult terrain amid high temperatures and, at the same time, at much greater rates than has previously been possible. Over a period of only eight days a three-man team collected both survey and topographical data on over 80,000 m² of terrain – considerably more data than could have been collected by a similar number of project staff in the same time with traditional equipment. In addition to the quantity of data, the use of digital topographical recording and 3D modelling has allowed the results of geophysical exploration to be tied into 'real' space using GPS and be laid over models of the landscape, rather than just being presented as flat surfaces. This integration of data types not only allows for 'better' or clearer presentation of the data but it also provides considerable tools for its interpretation.

As demonstrated through the two case study areas, considerable sub-surface structures and likely deposits of ferrous material have been identified from the raw data acquired by the team in 2007. The whole street-grid seems to have been built up with substantial remains being found around the agora, on the acropolis and to the north of the Temple of Zeus. Important points can be drawn from all of these regions. Around the Temple of Zeus we see large structures in what could be viewed as the urban periphery. These findings suggest that other peripheral areas may be similarly built up and future work by the group will target other unexcavated parts of the city's suburbs/ border areas. This will establish a more accurate plan of Cyrene for our research priorities, creating a fuller understanding of the street network and its buildings, and thereby the relationship between structures, centre and periphery and city and countryside. In terms of heritage management, the work will create a resource to enable better protection and recognition of the possible impact of threats to the archaeological deposits from encroachment and damage by construction and agriculture around Shahat. The work on Area 6, meanwhile, demonstrates that there are still major buildings in the heart of the urban area to be mapped or excavated. These structures will be key to comprehending the articulation of space – both public and private – at the heart of Cyrene and will give substance to discussions regarding their centrality and their conceptual place within the city. There may also be some scope for examining the structures revealed in the geophysical plans through an analysis of their space. Benech, for instance, has examined geophysical plans of structures at Dura-Europos using space analysis theories that have previously been applied to excavated remains, particularly at Pompeii

(Benech 2007; on the spatial analysis of structures at Pompeii see, for instance, Laurence 1997; Grahame 1997; Laurence 2007, 62–133; such analyses are heavily influenced by the work of the sociologists Hillier and Hanson on space, see for instance Hillier and Hanson 1984). Benech's work at Dura-Europos has shown that although there are problems in analysing geophysical maps in this way because passages between rooms, changes over time and some narrow walls do not always show up well, a space analysis of unexcavated spaces is possible with the results being comparable to similar analyses of excavated spaces (Benech 2007, 94–102). Spatial analyses have not been limited to domestic structures, with access to public buildings and roads also being analysed in this way (Laurence 2007; Newsome 2010). Further geophysical survey will extend the corpus of buildings at Cyrene that could be assessed in this manner and analytical comparison of the excavated and unexcavated structures would allow for a greater comprehension of the principles of how the Cyrenaeans arranged their domestic and public space.

Given the success of the 2007 season, CAP plans to undertake further seasons of work on the sub-surface remains of the city. In the long-term it is the project's aim to fully integrate the geophysical data with the 3D laser-scanning. Additionally, the linking of both the scans and magnetometry data into the GPS network allows the accurate tying of all the data together in their correct position; these will then be linked to the data contained in the GIS database of aerial photography and satellite imagery to provide multiple layers of data for researchers, educators and heritage managers. Although the current project has multiple facets and will benefit many constituencies, the research element of the work is its *raison d'être* and underpins its planning, direction and interpretation. The information gleaned from the magnetometry is clearly important in enhancing the knowledge of Graeco-Roman historians and archaeologists on Cyrene, and, perhaps by extension and comparison, other similar 'lost' or 'extinct' classical sites.

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Chapter 8

An 'Ice Age settling on the Roman Empire': Post-Roman Butrint between Strategy and Serendipity

William Bowden and Richard Hodges

And we are interpreted as portraying the Pirenne period as 'only' a depression, as 'a slight dip', even though we explicitly characterize the period as one that makes audible the 'background noise' of Mediterranean connectivity when the 'strident commercial networks' are silenced. If we use 'depression' and 'abatement' in portraying the period, this should not be taken to mean that we treat such phenomena as mere blips. It means simply that – to change metaphor – our 'degree zero' of Mediterranean exchange is a little higher than that of most other students of the period... (Horden and Purcell 2005, 351–2)

Nothing like cultural unity in more general terms was ever reached in the coastlands of the ancient Mediterranean prior to the Roman conquests, that is obvious, but it remains a central and open question of Roman history how much the populations of these territories, and not just their elites, shared social forms, productive technologies, languages, artistic forms, religious practices and beliefs, and many other cultural features. Horden and Purcell claim that such cultural unity as there was lasted into the Middle Ages; be that as it may, the study of cultural unity has to be the study of its formation and disintegration. (Harris 2005a, 28)

Introduction

Butrint, ancient *Buthrotum*, is situated 3 km from the Straits of Corfu on the Vivari Channel at the south end of Lake Butrint in Albania (Figure 8.1). With its fertile coastal niche extending 10 km into a mountainous valley and with access to legendary amounts of fish in Lake Butrint, it appears to fit the stereotype of a Mediterranean coastal location defined by Horden and Purcell in their influential *Corrupting Sea* (2000). But did the city of Butrint and its valley – connected to one of the main arteries of the Mediterranean – outlive antiquity, to continue in the Middle and Later Byzantine eras largely unaltered as a community? Or did it experience signal changes in its urban character with the end of antiquity, involving urban disintegration and abandonment and, ultimately, with the tenth-

century revival of Mediterranean trade, urban regeneration? Thanks to extensive surveys and large excavations providing a rare modern and sizeable sample of the changing topography of this ancient and medieval town, it is possible to evaluate in detail the architecture and material culture over the course of the immediate post-Roman phases.



Figure 8.1 *Butrint in its region*

The results of these excavations strongly sustain the image of dramatic change during the seventh century, showing a major contraction of settlement that lasted until the tenth. The Roman and high medieval towns of Butrint are separated by a 300-year period during which occupation was limited and most of the population only had access to a narrow range of material culture. New building work, which had formed a key part of the vocabulary of elite rhetoric in the Mediterranean for a thousand years, was almost non-existent, with the inhabitants occupying small post-built buildings or reusing earlier structures.

John Haldon (2006, 607) argued strongly that the opposition assumed between continuity and discontinuity is ‘overstated and misleading’. The effects of change, in Haldon’s view, are differential, impacting at varying speeds to varying extents in a multiplicity of ways upon the different aspects of a socio-cultural system. Continuity, he argued, ‘is always present at some level or in some sphere of human activity’. This can certainly be argued at Butrint, but at the same time these continuities do not negate the extent to which an

entire social system and the built and material environment that it engendered was rendered almost unrecognisable almost within the living memories of the town's inhabitants. The last people to use coins to make day-to-day financial purchases in Butrint may well have been able to remember the great baptistery and basilica being erected – the last monuments in a recognisably Roman cityscape that effectively vanished within the life-spans of its oldest inhabitants. Their experience should not become wholly subsumed in the terminology of 'intensification and abatement'.

The Later Roman and Early Medieval History of Butrint

The origins of Butrint remain obscure, but by the second century BC it can be recognised as a thriving settlement based around a cult centre of Aesclepius. Butrint had a brief moment in the political spotlight during the Julio-Claudian period when it was first declared a colony by Caesar, before a re-dedication by Augustus. There was a close relationship between the town and the family of the *Princeps*, an involvement represented by a rich epigraphic and sculptural legacy (Hansen and Hodges 2007; Hansen 2007). Thereafter, however, the town is poorly represented in Roman textual sources, appearing in late Roman itineraries (*Antonine Itinerary* 324,5; 488,7; 489,1; *Peutinger Table* VII.3), in the *Synekdemos* of Hierocles (written around AD 527/8), where it is listed as the seventh town of Old Epirus (Honigsmann 1939, 652,4), and in episcopal correspondence in AD 458 and 516, respectively referring to Bishops Stephen and Matthew (Soustal 2004, 20–22).

From the mid-fifth century onwards, the province of *Epirus Vetus* was increasingly affected by barbarian incursions, although Butrint is not specifically mentioned in relation to any of these episodes. The region was subjected to sea-borne raids by the Vandals in the 460s, and again by Ostrogoths under Totila in 551. The most serious incursions seem to have been those of the Slavs in 586/7, which reportedly displaced a significant section of the existing population who were forced to flee to southern Italy and the Ionian islands. The correspondence of Gregory the Great dealing with the plight of refugee bishops and their congregations indicates that the displaced populations became a long-standing problem. By 604, the four remaining bishops of mainland Epirus (aside from Andrew of Nikopolis) were guests of the fifth, Alkison of Kerkyra (Bowden 2003, 196–7). The much debated *Chronicle of Monemvasia* and the work of Arethas of Caesarea (writing in the tenth century) suggest that many of the existing population did not return (cf. Curta 2004). One can

note that the Slav presence in the Butrint region probably endured: Butrint lies in the region known in the thirteenth century as *Bagenetia* or *Vagenetia*, but this term can be traced back to the Slavic tribe known as the Baiunetai. The names *Vagenetia*, *Viyanite*, and *Viyantije* survived until the Turkish period, when in the sixteenth century the name Delvina (now the small town between Saranda and Gjirokastra) became commonly used instead. The so-called *Partitio Romaniae*, the document of 1204 describing the division of the Byzantine Empire, compiled on the basis of Byzantine tax registers, records the *chartularaton de Bagenetia* (see Soustal 2004, 22).

A miscellany of casual references after the seventh century illustrates that other geo-political factors impacted upon the region. Butrint owed its primary allegiance to Byzantium. A lead seal found in the Lower Danube region, probably at Silistra in north-east Bulgaria, belongs to a certain Theodorus who was the imperial *spatharios* and *archon* of *Vagenetia* in the early eighth century. Curta (2006, 103) speculates that he was ‘a local chieftain in Byzantine service’. In the so-called *Notitia of the Iconoclasts*, compiled after AD 754, Butrint is listed (as *Bythipotu*) as the fourth and penultimate city of Old Epirus, subject to the metropolitan see of Nikopolis. In the late ninth century (880–884), St. Elias the Younger and his companion Daniel were accused of being *Hagarenes* (Muslims) and spies, and imprisoned at Butrint (*polis epineios*). In 904 the relics of St. Elias, who had died in Thessalonika, were brought to Butrint via *Thessalia*, *Hellas* and *Thesprotia*, to be taken from there by ship to Calabria (Rossi Taibbi 1962, XVI, 116 (c. 73), 182; Soustal 2004, 22). Little more is known about Butrint as a town at this time. Arsenios of Corfu (876–953) who apparently visited Epirus to plead with Slav pirates to desist their raids, recorded that Butrint was rich in fish and oysters, with a fertile hinterland. The inventories of bishoprics from the tenth to twelfth centuries identify the Bishop of Butrint as a suffragan of the metropolitan bishopric of Naupaktos, the ecclesiastical province which took the name of the old provincial capital of Nikopolis in southern Epirus (Soustal 1981; 2004).

Field Strategies and Serendipity

The Butrint Foundation Project began in 1994 in a theoretical context that could be defined as the search for a post-Pirenne paradigm (cf. Hodges 1998; Hodges et al. 2004: 9). Some years before Michael McCormick’s influential *Origin of the Medieval Economy* (2001), our aim was to examine how a critically located port on a significant seaway adapted to the transformation of the Roman world. Situated at the southern end of the Adriatic Sea, its harbours – to judge from the

Roman and later medieval sources (see Soustal 2004) – served shipping making for the Adriatic littorals and south-east Italy in particular, as well as southern Italy as far west as Sicily. The first excavator of Butrint, Luigi Maria Ugolini, identified the oscillating connectivity between Butrint and its immediate region and southern Italy, although in Ugolini's case demonstrating the ancient connections between Butrint and Italy was also expedient in the political atmosphere in which he operated (Gilkes 2003a, 23). The challenge for the Butrint Foundation team was to confront the question of the changing nature of a Mediterranean port not through the study of isolated monuments in the context of an established historical narrative, but through establishing and explaining generational changes in the city's fabric. Documenting Butrint's environmental context as well as the evolution of settlement in its environs was equally essential to comprehending the city's history.

Given the opportunity to investigate the city and its associated landscape, our strategy was comparatively straightforward. We began with several concurrent surveys: a new topographical survey of the ancient city; a new survey of its main standing monuments; a survey of the environmental context; a traditional field survey of the immediate surrounding territory including the Vrina Plain drained by dykes installed in the 1960s; and a survey of the archival sources. We also launched a series of small excavations at selective points in the city (beside the Baptistry; in an adjacent Nymphaeum; in an extramural cemetery area; and in the Triconch Palace) to investigate the stratigraphical resources.

Our point of departure for the excavation methodology was Martin Carver's *Arguments in Stone* (1993) which readily assumed (as we did) that a north European methodology (rooted in north European historiographic traditions) might be easily translated to a Mediterranean context. As in many similar projects, such an assumption was soon to be dispelled. First, our Albanian collaborators, as we have recorded elsewhere, had their own historical paradigm rooted in sustaining a national myth (Bowden and Hodges 2004) which took no account of contemporary historiography. Second, although our approach involved sampling on a major scale, identifying stratigraphic deposits as predicated by Carver's method, this was complicated by tree cover, by the changing and high water table, and most of all by the realisation that only open-area excavation with an immense commitment to labour and post-excavation analysis offers a suitable instrument for interpreting inter-period and intra-settlement differentiations. Put more baldly, Carver's method, which advocated small-scale excavation to solve specific problems of urban topography, together with 'deposit modelling' between excavated

samples, did not work in the context of late antique and medieval Butrint. Problems of residuality, the repeated remodelling and reuse of structures throughout the Roman period and the large-scale secondary movement of deposits in antiquity (during construction work and terracing) meant that the results of keyhole archaeology were inconclusive at best and totally misleading at worst. As a result, our initial investigations from 1994–99 summarised in *Byzantine Butrint* (Hodges et al. 2004), although dramatically increasing our understanding of Butrint, provided only an imprecise overview of the town and its changing topography.

Many projects would have halted after this extensive range of investigations but, with support from the Packard Humanities Institute, from 2000 we developed a constellation of major excavations. Large excavations were initially opened at the Triconch Palace to review a waterside sector of the city (Bowden et al. 2002, 201–9; Bowden and Mitchell 2007; Gilkes et al. 2002; Bowden and Hodges 2011), and the lakeside villa at Diaporit, identified in the field survey 4 km north-east of Butrint (Bowden et al. 2002, 209–19; Bowden and Përzhita 2004a). Concurrently, we embarked upon a programme to identify the suburb of Butrint on the Vrina Plain, first by a new extensive geophysical survey (following initial surveys in 1996–98) with an associated study of the environmental conditions, then by test-trenching along a drainage dyke made in the 1960s, and subsequently by two large open-area excavations focused upon two very different parts of the suburb (Greenslade et al. 2006; Bescoby 2007; Crowson and Gilkes 2007). These excavations, supported in particular by the remarkable knowledge and dedication of our ceramic specialists, Paul Reynolds and Joanita Vroom, provided a wholly revised understanding of the urban history of Butrint from its earliest occupation until the Ottoman age. Plainly, some of this approach evolved strategically to confront different period-based paradigms. However, our understanding of the seventh to eleventh centuries here has been enhanced not always as a result of judgements taken to identify these periods but by serendipity, in that some of the most significant discoveries relating to the Byzantine Dark Age came more by accident than design. How, we need to ask, are we to interpret this serendipity – bearing in mind, of course, that serendipity for the most part has determined the survival of the historical texts that form the framework for this period?

One early instance of this was when the chance arose to excavate a limited area in the centre of Butrint with a view to finding the Roman forum. Further opportunities then followed to (i) explore a section of the acropolis prior to backfilling and landscaping the 1990–94 excavations, (ii) excavate ahead of conservation a tower in the

Western Defences, and (iii) investigate an area adjacent to the well of Junia Rufina beside the northern postern gate, known as the Lion Gate. These extra explorations, executed with knowledge gained from the excavations at Diaporit, the Vrina Plain and the Triconch Palace, proved particularly important for correcting our views of the Middle Byzantine period. Based upon these new excavations, we have re-examined many of the standing monuments, including the fortifications and the Great Basilica, and in so doing discovered close to the Water Gate the remains of a Roman bridge.

There has been, in other words, a sequence of investigations that initially followed a strategy of the kind propagated by Carver, which serendipitously gave rise to excavation opportunities, then in turn led to the development of revised and modified field strategies.

The Archaeology of Late Roman and Mid-Byzantine Butrint

While space does not allow a detailed treatment of Butrint's complex archaeology, the following paragraphs summarise the present state of our knowledge regarding the late antique town and the situation that followed the radical transformations that occurred here from AD 550 onwards.

By AD 300, Butrint was already markedly different to the town that had flourished during the first and second centuries AD, and which had expanded onto the Vrina Plain to the south (see [Figure 8.2](#)). On the forum, already around the mid-third century, the presumed *Capitolium* had been demolished and quarried for *spolia*, an activity accompanied by destruction of statuary and inscriptions. Although the forum itself remained active, it eventually fell out of use around the mid-fourth century, when the surrounding buildings were demolished and also quarried for materials. Thick layers of rubble then sealed the forum pavement, which had developed a significant slope to the south (the south side being 0.60 m lower than the north side), probably as a result of seismic activity during the fourth century (Hernandez and Condi 2008) (see [Figure 8.3](#)).

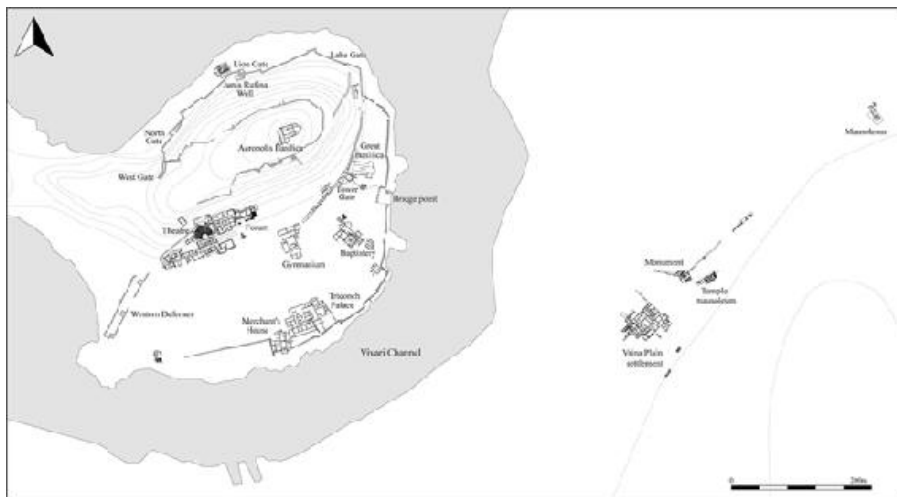


Figure 8.2 Plan of the late antique walled town and Vrina Plain

Although the public areas of the Roman town were clearly losing their public function, private building suggests that some sections of the population retained access to significant quantities of surplus wealth. On the Vrina Plain, for example, although many of the buildings had been abandoned by the third century, one townhouse was partly refurbished in the late third century, even if this was a shadow of the colossal first- and second-century house that preceded it (Greenslade et al. 2006). Within the town, however, the excavations at the Triconch Palace revealed a house or *domus* that became steadily more grandiose from the third century onwards (see Figure 8.4). The earlier phases of this expanded house reflect the practice noted elsewhere in the Roman Empire in which architecture was increasingly used in the private sphere to articulate social relationships: a long corridor or gallery, 25 m in length and paved entirely in mosaic, led from an elaborately decorated entrance vestibule to a reception room where the owner of the house would have greeted his guests. This reception room, also paved with elaborate mosaics, was later (perhaps in the fourth century) augmented with an apse (Bowden and Mitchell 2007; Bowden and Hodges 2011).

It has become increasingly apparent that Butrint suffered from a cataclysmic event around the middle of the fourth century, with the town possibly the macro-seismic epicentre of a strong earthquake recorded in AD 358 (Guidoboni 1994, 261). The region as a whole is seen as the focus of the so-called ‘Early Byzantine Tectonic Paroxysm’, a period of intense tectonic movement across the mid-fourth to mid-sixth centuries (Pirazzoli et al. 1996). As noted above, this seemingly caused the southern side of the forum to slump by around 0.60 m. A

contemporaneous drop of a similar magnitude may have occurred in the area of the Triconch Palace, and this complex may have been abandoned until rebuilding around AD 400. After this rebuilding, the floor levels of the new *domus* stood around 0.50 m above those of the previous phase, with a layer of rubble used as a base for the higher pavement; this may have been to counter the effect of seasonal inundations of water that would have affected the building following the subsidence induced by the earthquake, and which in fact continue to affect the area today (Bowden et al. 2011a, 37).

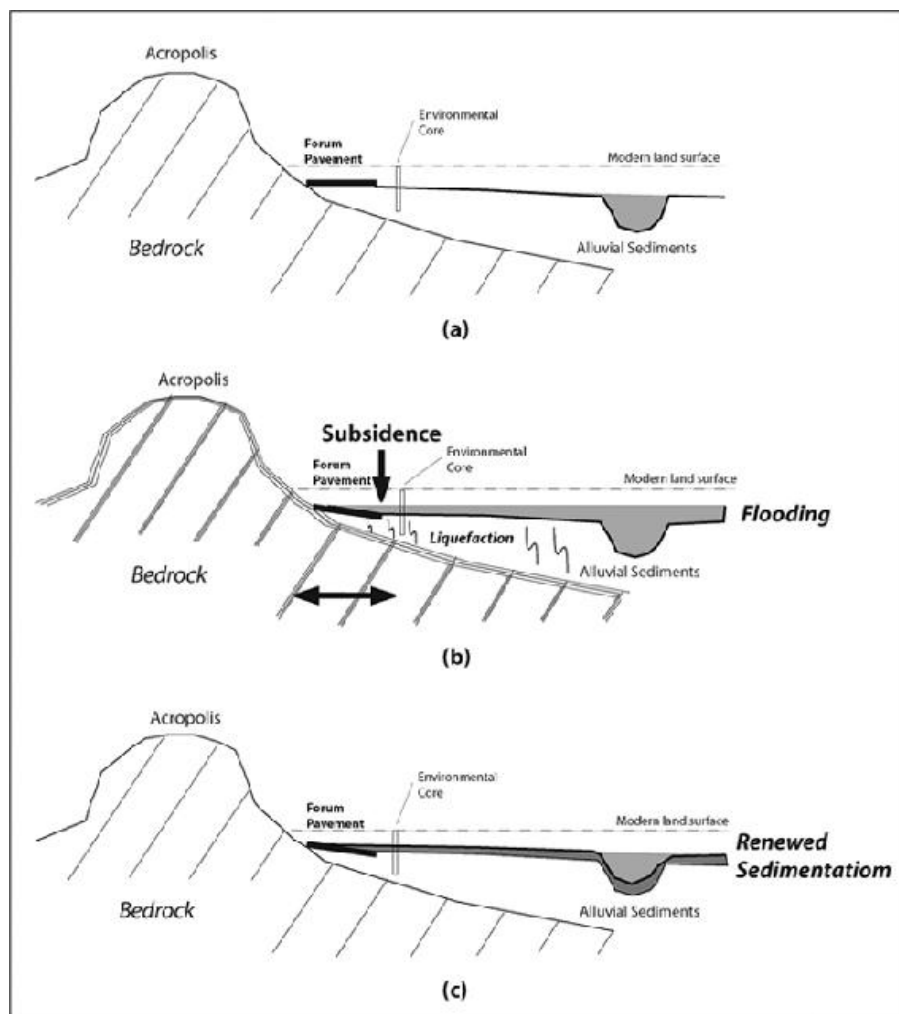


Figure 8.3 Schematic section showing effect of seismic activity on Butrint

When the *domus* was rebuilt, it included a revised western entrance with a mosaic, with an inscription read by Charlotte Roueché as ...]

Ἀμαρίω τῷ λανπ[ρ]οτά[τ]ω ... suggesting the owner was of senatorial rank, *lanprotatos* being the equivalent of the Latin *clarissimus* (Bowden et al. 2002, 205; Bowden et al. 2011a, 25-8). This gave access to a new peristyle surrounded by porticos paved with mosaic. The drain that took water away from this peristyle cut through the mosaic of the long gallery, which seems to have lost its public function in this phase. However, only two decades later (around AD 420) the entire complex was remodelled, with the addition of a colossal peristyle more than three times the size of its predecessor. At the same time, the owner of the house was able to expand the house onto the adjacent property (perhaps blocking a street in the process), allowing the construction of the monumental triconch *triclinium* from which the building takes its modern name. The western entrance was blocked and different entrances were constructed on the north and south sides of the building, including an elaborate double-apsed vestibule with colonnaded entrances that allowed access to the building for those arriving by boat.

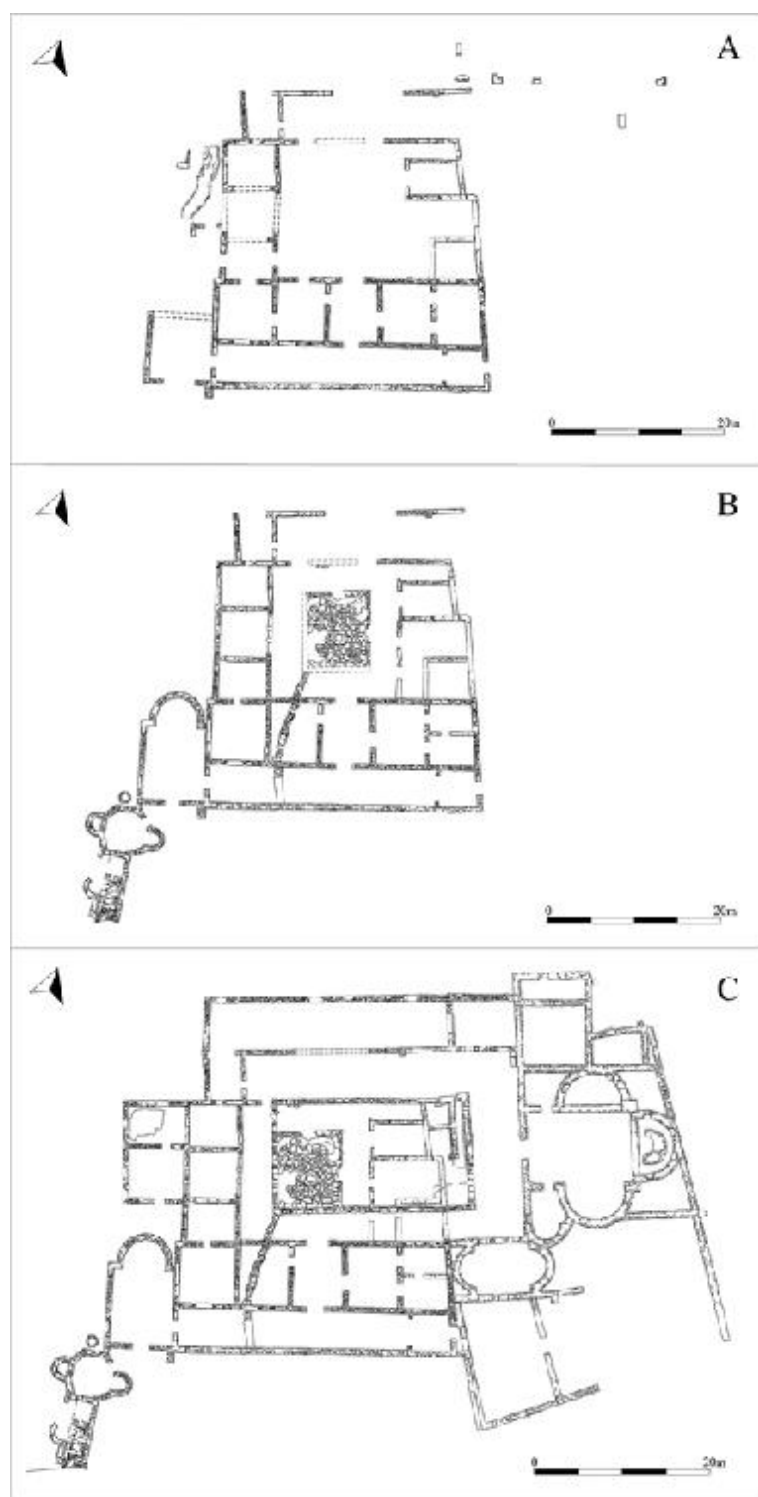


Figure 8.4 The three major phases of the Triconch Palace (A – third

This grandiose project was seemingly never finished: between AD 425 and 450 the west wing of the building was occupied by a much simpler dwelling from which storage *pithoi* and a cooking hearth survived. This simpler form of dwelling, sometimes with a second storey, became the norm in Butrint after the mid-fifth century (Bowden and Mitchell 2007), and seems to reflect a wider ‘retreat’ from elaborate domestic building in the central Mediterranean, since, although many late antique *domus* continued to be occupied after the mid-fifth century, very few new examples of the type were constructed (Ellis 1988, 565; Ellis 2007, 11–13).

From the second half of the fifth century the most visible expenditure seems to have been on Christian buildings. This included the newly discovered church on the Vrina Plain, built by anonymous donors recorded in a mosaic inscription as those ‘whose names are known to God’. This was erected in the remains of the townhouse noted above, with the apsed *aula* of the earlier building partly reused as the narthex (Greenslade et al. 2006) (see [Figure 8.5](#)).

In the town itself, the second quarter of the sixth century saw the construction of the remarkable Baptistery (Bowden and Përzhita 2004b) and a major basilica almost 32 m in length, the latter constructed on the eastern side of the walled city close to the bridge crossing the Vivari Channel (Bowden and Mitchell 2004, 106–11). On the eastern side of Lake Butrint the abandoned remains of an earlier Roman villa at Diaporit were used as the site of a new Christian complex, built around AD 500, focused around three tombs located in the apse of a three-aisled basilica. To the south of the church an additional complex of buildings perhaps hosted pilgrims to the site (Bowden and Përzhita 2004a) (see [Figure 8.6](#)).

It should be noted that at the same time that these grand ecclesiastical structures were being erected, the Triconch Palace was being reduced to small-scale domestic occupation and the processing of shell fish, with huge dumps of mussel shells being found in the remains of the earlier house, which also suffered quarrying for building materials. This suggests that the presence of major Christian buildings alone cannot be used as an indicator of wider urban vitality, just as post-built structures and secondary occupation of monumental buildings should not be seen as indicative of general urban decline.

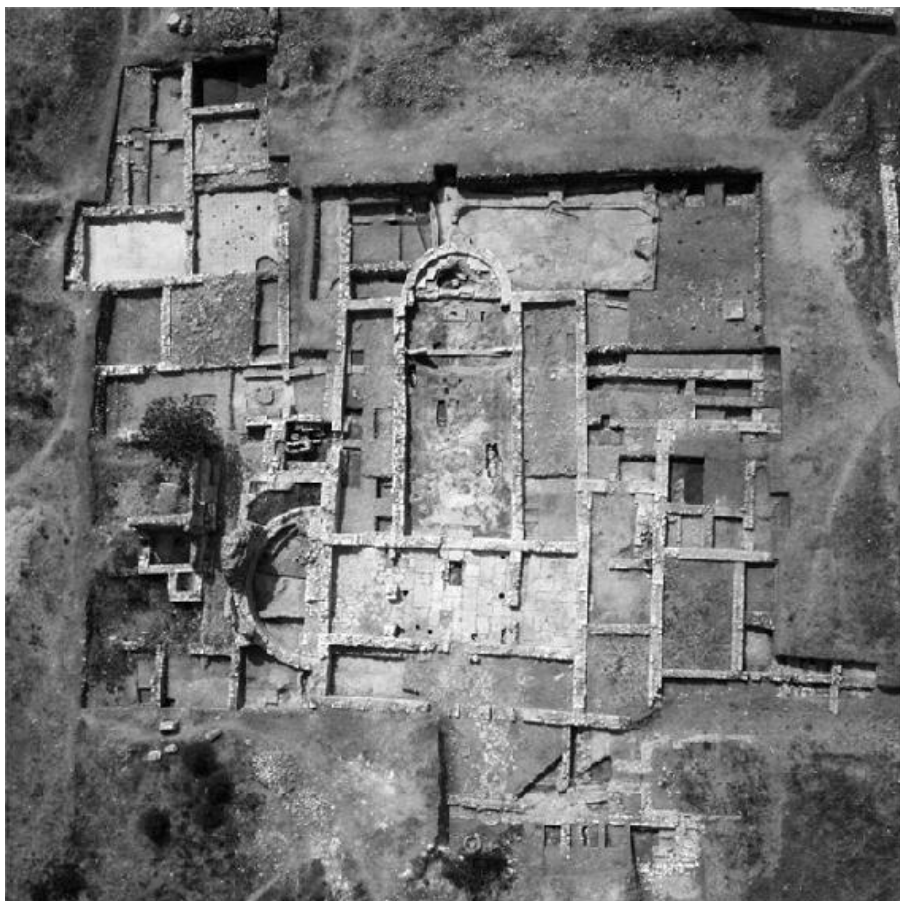


Figure 8.5 *The Vrina Plain early Christian complex (Alket Islami)*

The fortifications of Butrint were built in the early sixth century (Bowden et al. 2011b, 175-84) and most probably relate to a campaign of fortification instigated by Anastasius (491–518) (who is also credited with the rather more impressive walls of Dyrracchium (Dürres) on the Adriatic coast to the north) (Gutteridge et al. 2001). They encircled a much larger area (c. 12 hectares) than the earlier Hellenistic walls (which encircled an area of around 6 hectares), and on the south and east sides of the city were built along the waterfront to utilise the natural defences of the peninsula, often including walls from earlier buildings in their construction. On the north flank, the defences reutilised the Hellenistic circuit and gates, which survived largely intact. The western side of the city, which was most vulnerable to attack from the land, was the most heavily defended, with a series of strongly built square towers projecting from the wall line (Andrews et al. 2004). These towers would subsequently form the core of occupation in the eighth century (see below).



Figure 8.6 *The early Christian complex at Diaporit, looking across the putative pilgrims' complex to the church beyond*

There are some indications that additional changes began to occur around AD 550, when the church and associated monastic complex at Diaporit were abandoned. Perhaps more significantly the ceramic assemblage from the Triconch Palace shows a marked change in the supply of fineware and amphorae (and presumably related perishable food imports) to Butrint around this date, when the quantity of Tunisian material drops significantly. In this sense it conforms to western Mediterranean patterns as a site that was not benefitting from Byzantine state supply systems following the Byzantine reconquest of North Africa (Reynolds 2004, 241). The full impact of the Byzantine reconquest of both North Africa and Italy on the maritime economy of the Mediterranean remains unclear, but, as Paul Reynolds has shown, some of its effects are clearly registered in the ceramic record at Butrint.

Also from around AD 550 (and perhaps earlier) burials began to appear within the space defined by the city walls, with scattered amphora burials and inhumations being inserted into the rooms of the former Triconch Palace, interspersed with dumps of rubbish. At the same time the former long gallery of the *domus* was used for small-scale industry, including blacksmithing. The exception was a small but well-built two-storey building erected adjacent to the former palace in an angle formed by the city wall (see [Figure 8.7](#)). The latter suggests

the presence of a type of building that was becoming increasingly common in the western Mediterranean, in which living accommodation was on the upper storey, while the ground floor was used for livestock and storage (Bowden and Mitchell 2007, 467–8; Bowden 2011, 314–17). This type of structure is a graphic indication of the ways in which lifestyles were changing in Butrint by the end of the sixth century.

By the seventh century, urban activity had diminished dramatically, with the latest amphora burial in the triconch area dating to c. 650. No seventh-century activity was evident at either Diaporit or on the Vrina Plain (a group of amphorae from Diaporit originally thought to be of late seventh-century date (Reynolds, in Bowden et al. 2002) is now thought to date to the sixth century). Our original interpretation of this evidence was that seventh- to ninth-century Butrint was reduced to little more than a castle occupying the acropolis, following the model suggested by Haldon (1999) and others. Opportunities to re-examine earlier excavations on the acropolis, however, together with reappraisals of the excavated material, showed little obvious sign of such a *kastron*. In 2007, however, a fortuitous combination of circumstances (in part created by factional conflict between different bodies involved in the site's management) led to the opportunity to excavate within one of the towers on the city's Western Defences.



Figure 8.7 Two-storey building, dating to the second half of the sixth

These had previously not been investigated because the level of overlying rubble and the parlous state of the tower masonry had meant that the level of resources required for excavation were unlikely to be justified by the possible results. However, a lengthy clearance operation by the Butrint National Park authority gave scope for excavation, which we undertook partly to clarify some of the remains revealed by the Park authority's intervention.

To our great surprise this excavation located extensive and unprecedented remains of eighth-century occupation, suggesting that the eighth-century *kastron* was at least partly focused around the towers in the lower city's landward defences (Kamani 2011). Vivid remains of the tower's ground and first floor were found, thanks to a cataclysmic fire which engulfed it around AD 800 (see [Figure 8.8](#)): a wooden internal staircase, the two upper floors and the tiled roof had collapsed downwards, crushing the stored contents just inside the ground-floor door. These items included a crate of glass comprising 61 goblets and cullet – a consignment destined for a glass-maker somewhere (Jennings 2010) – plus a line of nine smashed amphorae from southern Italy, the Aegean (possibly Crete) and the Crimea. There were White Ware jugs from Constantinople and local pots, so-called Avaro-Slavic types, as well as two portable ovens (known as chafing dishes) (Vroom 2012). Excavations in 2008 in the adjacent tower to the south produced a similar assemblage, again in a destruction level caused by a fire. Two such cataclysms cannot have been coincidental and surely signify that the towers were destroyed deliberately, presumably in an attack. The ceramics are dated to the later eighth or earlier ninth centuries.

Small numbers of comparable sherds are known elsewhere in Butrint at the acropolis, forum and Triconch Palace. But no traces of related buildings have been found and it seems likely that, as at the towers in the Western Defences, any inhabitants were using extant structures, making them much less visible to us archaeologically. The inhabitants of the Western Defences, however, had access to a range and quantity of material culture that was unavailable to anyone living in any of the other excavated areas. Why the occupation was focused here as opposed to the acropolis remains a mystery. Perhaps these were the most habitable towers or maybe their occupants wanted direct visual control over shipping plying the Corfu Straits?

The fortunes of Butrint in the decades following the destruction of c. AD 800 are unknown. However, perhaps within a generation, Butrint was clearly occupied again, even if the location and character of this

occupation were markedly different to that of the late eighth century. Excavations in the Roman suburb on the Vrina Plain, to the south of the walled town, brought to light the successor to the tower-houses: here, in the ruins of the fifth-century church described above, the manor-house or *oikos* (as termed by Magdalino 1984) of the ninth-century commander was discovered (Greenslade and Hodges 2013). Post-holes found within the paved narthex of the fifth-century basilica show that its upper floor was reinforced to take a new residence covering 7.10 x 5.80 m. With the post-holes fire-blasted through the paving stones, the primitive architecture of the house cannot be understated (see [Figure 8.9](#)).



Figure 8.8 *Destruction levels from the Western Defences, dating to c. AD 800*

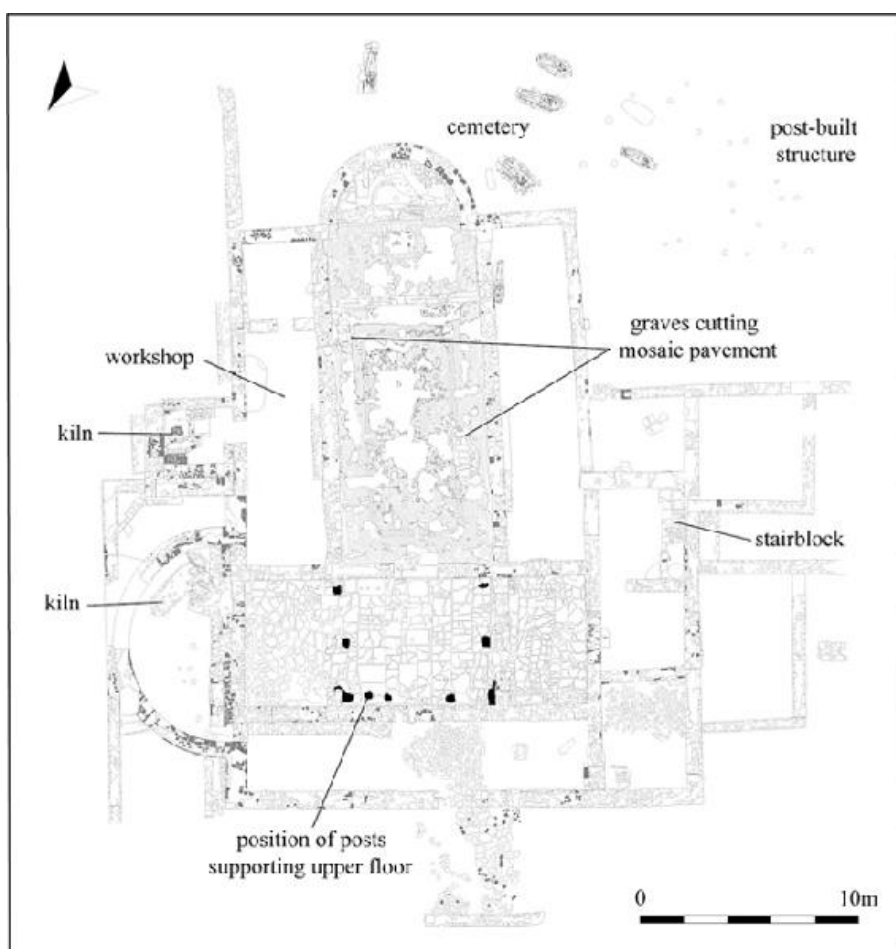


Figure 8.9 The ninth- to tenth-century 'Archon's House' on the Vrina Plain

No less fascinating are the contemporary conditions. The ground floor of the *oikos*, like the areas around the church, was covered in a thick deposit of black earth in which 47 bronze *folles* spanning c. 840–980 and a silver *milaresion* of Leo VI (886–912) were found as well as five Byzantine lead seals belonging to the same period (Table 1) (Papadopoulou 2012; 313–14). These record five imperial officials and clearly suggest that the Vrina Plain site served a significant administrative purpose.

Table 8.1 Seals from the Vrina Plain excavations. Transcribed and translated by Pagona Papadopoulou (see also Papadopoulou 2012 and forthcoming)

Number	Legend			
La(SF2468)				

+Καλλωνᾶ ῥ
 βασηλ(ικῶ) (πρωτο)
 σπαθαρ(ίω) (καὶ) [ἐ]πὶ
 τῶν ο[ἰκ]ιακὸν ιy

+Kallō/na basēl(ikō)/a
 spathar(iō)/(kai) [e]
 pi tōn o/[iki]akon =
 Kallonas, imperial
 protospatharios and epi
 ton oikiakon
 First half of 10th c.
 βασιλικῶ) (πρωτο)
 σπαθαρήω (και) loulō
 στρατηγῶ Σηκηλίας it.

+Iōann/ē patrēkē/ō
 b(asilikō) spatha/rēō
 (kai) stra/tēgō Sē/
 kēlias = John, patrikios
 and strategos of Sicily
 Early 10th c.
 βασιλικῶ) (πρωτο)
 σπαθαρ(ίω) [και do[ul]
 σ]τρατη[γῶ] rvant

Δυρραχ(ίου)
 +Kōns/tantin(ō)
 b(asilikō)/a
 spathar(iō)/ [kai
 s]tratē/[gō]/
 Durrach(iou) =
 Constantine imperial
 protospatharios
 and strategos of
 Dyrrachion

+Κωνσταντ(ίνου) β(ασιλικοῦ) σπαθ(αρο) κουβικουλ(αρίου) (καὶ) ἐπ[ι] τ(ῆς) οἰκιακ[ῆ](ς) τραπέ(ζης) +Kōn/stant(inou) b(asilikou)/ spath(aro) koub/ ikoul(ariou) (kai) ep[i]/ t(ēs) oikiak[ē] (s)/trape(zēs) = Constantine imperial <i>spatharoskoubikoularios</i> and <i>epi tes oikiakes</i> <i>trapezes</i> 1011 +P[et]ro β(ασιλικῶ) τῶ (πρωτο)[σπα]θ(αρίῳ) (καὶ) στρ(ατηγῶ) sō +P[et]/ro ba(silikō) 1y a [spa]/th(ariō) (kai) str[at/ēgō] = Peter (?) imperial <i>protospatharios</i> and <i>strategos</i>		
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The black earth deposit also extended into the south aisle of the earlier church, while the north aisle, judging from hearths discovered here, was deployed as a workshop. A small mausoleum of fifth-century date off the north aisle now housed a single-flue pottery kiln. The nave of the fifth-century basilica was made into an inhumation cemetery from the mid-ninth century, with graves rudely puncturing the earlier mosaic pavement. One adult tomb contained a fine copper-alloy openwork ornamental buckle, which is closely paralleled by a buckle found at Paleokastritsa on Corfu, dated to the late eighth century (Agallopoulou 1973). A secondary cemetery beyond the church apse included a disturbed adult burial possibly associated with a silver-plated horse bit, while another adult may have been interred

with a Byzantine *folles* in his pocket.

The ceramics, like the prolific coins, belong to the mid-ninth to mid-tenth centuries and distinguish the culture of this *oikos* household from that found in the tower at Butrint: amphorae of a distinctive Otranto type make up about 50 per cent of the pottery (cf. Vroom 2012, 370-74)), while local kitchen wares almost certainly made at the site itself amount to most of the rest. There is clear trade in transport amphorae, presumably containing wine, from the heel of Italy, while the ornamental metal fittings and jewellery from the associated high-status tombs in the old church show connections to points in the south-west Balkans. The seals confirm the administrative role of this household. Certainly, the material culture and art distinguish the household from anything yet found in the large excavations in Butrint. Might this even be where St. Elias the Younger and his companion, Daniel, were held prisoner in the 880s, on suspicion of being Arab spies, on returning from the Peloponnese?

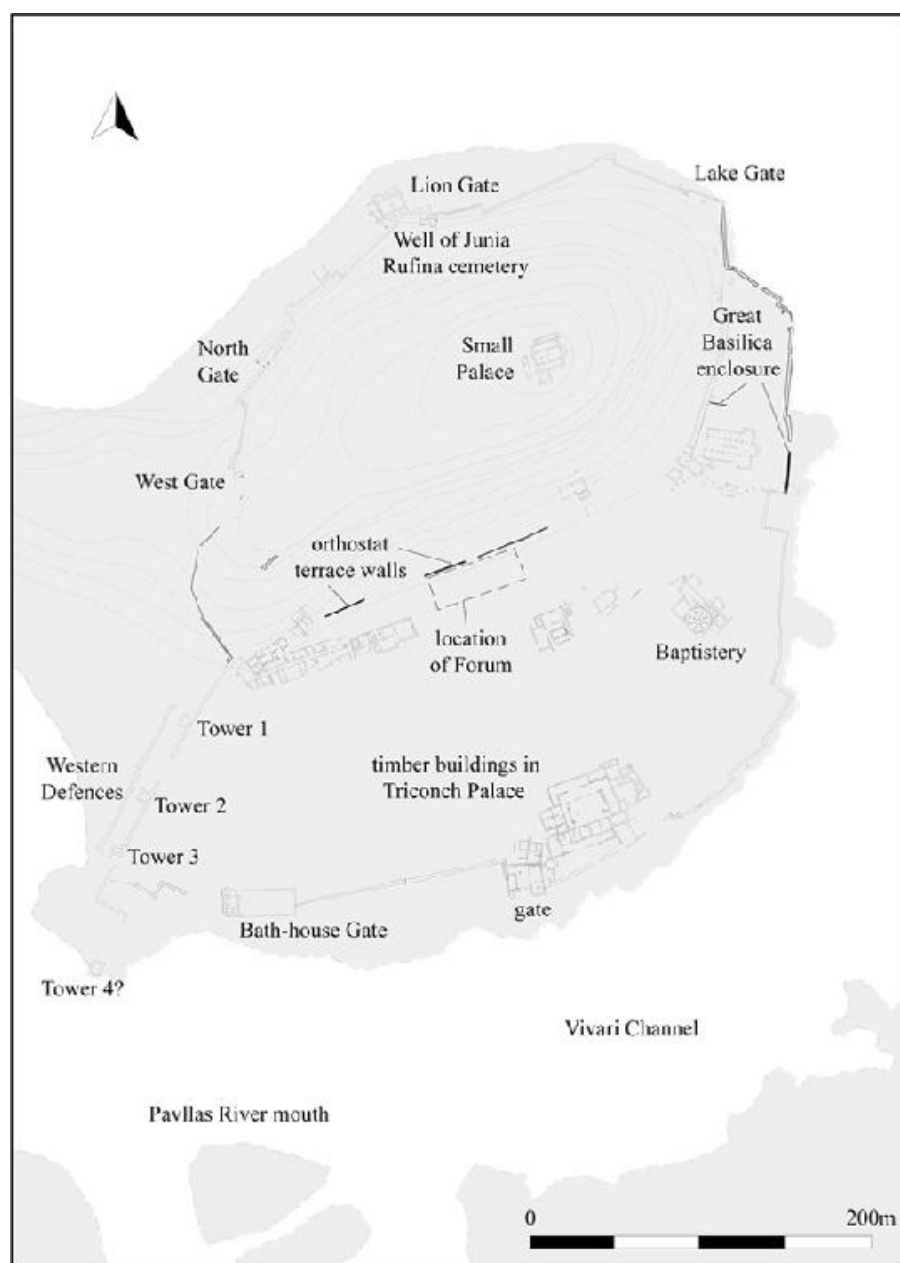


Figure 8.10 Plan of Butrint in the eleventh century

The Vrina Plain site was apparently abandoned in the mid-tenth century. Interestingly, a new study of the geomorphology at Butrint and on the Vrina Plain shows clearly that the environmental context of *Buthrotum* (which was situated in an open-water estuarine location) changed inexorably and significantly after the sixth century (Bescoby et al. 2008): continued silting of the estuary meant that the waters

became shallower and probably less accessible to deep-draught boats; effectively the archon's dwelling on the Vrina Plain by the tenth century came to lie in an increasingly marshy and inaccessible location, most probably contributing to its abandonment.

The number of later ninth- to early eleventh-century coins found in the walled town of Butrint indicates some significant change occurring across this timespan (see [Figure 8.10](#)). Certainly there was renewed and intensive activity in the area of the former Triconch Palace, where stone- and post-built structures were erected above the remains of the Roman buildings (Bowden and Hodges, 2011).

Intriguingly, huge quantities of ceramics show a similar picture to that noted on the Vrina Plain (although persisting later in the Triconch area), with southern Italian amphorae forming the bulk of the imports in comparison with tablewares, which were very limited. This situation persisted until the late eleventh century when ceramic supply to Butrint became much more eastern Mediterranean and Aegean-based (Vroom 2012 and in prep). This suggests a very specific supply mechanism to Butrint from the mid-ninth to eleventh centuries and one much more regionally specific than that of the eighth century. The emphasis on bulk transport vessels from a single region could suggest supply to a primarily military settlement, although this remains a matter of speculation. It is tempting to relate the refurbishment of the city walls also to this phase: a new survey of the fortifications (by a University of Siena team led by Giovanna Bianchi) recommends that the phase described as 'Medieval 1' (previously suggested to date to the thirteenth century – Andrews et al. 2004, 137) may in fact date to c. AD 1000, although as yet no stratified evidence has been recovered to confirm this.

From the eleventh century, there is evidence of intensive new activity at Butrint, involving the creation of substantial terracing on the slopes of the acropolis and a series of large walls that may represent property divisions since they are not associated with any building. In addition, a massive new terrace was erected above the conspicuous levels of fine silty alluvium which overlay late antique levels directly on top of the Roman forum pavement (unpublished Butrint Foundation interim report, 2007; cf. Hernandez and Çondi 2008). Running E–W over this terrace was an orthostat wall made of roughly reworked Hellenistic blocks, which had two anonymous *folles* [Class A2/A3 (of c. AD 976–1030/5) and Class C (c. 1042–1050)] embedded in the fabric. Sections of this particular wall could be traced in a westerly direction across the area of the orchestra in the theatre, where they were removed during the 1928–32 excavations (Ugolini 2003, 78); other sections lay to the east, running along the lower contours of the hillslope towards the north-west corner of the

Great Basilica. Two further tracts were discovered either side of the Great Basilica: one short stretch appears to have run from the Hellenistic fortifications eastwards to form part of an enclosure around the Great Basilica; associated with this was an anonymous *follis* Class A (c. 970–1030/5) (unpublished excavation by Neritan Ceka, 2005; see also Ceka 2006). The second section of orthostat walling, 1.0 m high, runs across the top of the Roman bridge (see [Figure 8.11](#)); whether this formed a defensive wall or the eastern side to the putative enclosure around the Great Basilica is a matter of speculation. On the acropolis there is a similar small enclosure formed of these distinctive orthostats.

It is clear therefore that there was a progressive revival in the scale and extent of renewal and occupation at Butrint from the late ninth century onwards, and that by the mid-eleventh century this reoccupation was on a scale that required the reclamation of previously abandoned areas through terracing and the control of land through property divisions. The ceramic assemblages from the late eleventh century have a stronger eastern Mediterranean focus, suggesting that this enlarged community was engaged in a much wider range of commercial links than that of the preceding settlement with its narrower south Italian focus.

Discussion

What does Butrint tell us about the archaeology of *vrbes extinctae* and about the nature of the former towns of the Roman Mediterranean during the immediate post-Roman period? Butrint, as a town in a liminal position between East and West, flourished during the Roman period, taking advantage of its strategic location on the Corfu Straits, through which passed most of the shipping between the eastern Mediterranean and the Adriatic. With the break-up of the Empire and the decline of Mediterranean commerce to a scale of prehistoric proportions, Butrint was reduced to little more than an outlying Byzantine castle by AD 700, if it retained any real connection with a centralised administration at all. At the same time, the Butrint Foundation's excavations have shown that the town that disappeared during the early seventh century was a settlement that had undergone a continual and dynamic process of change throughout its existence: the Roman town had expanded dramatically onto the Vrina Plain in the late first century AD but most of this suburb of grand town houses was abandoned by the start of the third century; the forum was altered from its earlier monumental form before falling from use in the mid-fourth century; yet the town's wealthy inhabitants continued to build and augment luxurious residences. Significant damage was

caused by one or more earthquakes around the mid-fourth century, but whether or not this caused a hiatus in activity, there was no long-term effect on the ability of some of Butrint's inhabitants to pay for a lifestyle that included grandiose residences and the everyday use of large quantities of imported goods. By the end of the fifth century, however, surplus wealth seems to have been primarily directed towards the building of churches, while private houses declined in scale and grandeur, despite their occupants still having access to a wide range of imported goods including pottery, glass, and ivory as well as perishables that we cannot now recover.



Figure 8.11 The orthostat wall blocking the Roman bridge

The changes after AD 550, however, seem to have been of a different magnitude and are reflected in both the built environment of the town and its outlying settlements. Concurrently the range of imported material began to shrink, with a decline in access to products from North Africa, perhaps as a result of the Justinianic reconquest (Reynolds 2004). This process accelerated during the first decades of the seventh century after which there is no evidence of new construction, coin use disappears and the material culture of Butrint seemingly diminishes to a vanishing point around AD 650.

Thus far this picture reflects that noted in many other Mediterranean urban centres although the scale of the Butrint excavations has allowed more nuance to be added to our findings than is sometimes possible elsewhere. The causes of the changes observed and the nature and extent of their effects are multivariate: Justinian's ambitious efforts to re-unite the Roman Empire are likely to have had a destabilising effect, leading to a spiral of increased taxation, diminished trading and, of course, the barbarian intervention that

accompanied the increasingly fluid geo-political situation. Undoubtedly pestilence was also a factor in this era. The combination inevitably stifled the Mediterranean economy, subjecting a maritime centre like Butrint and its dependencies to inevitable recession. As the menace of the Slavs, both perceived and real, struck the region, so the community seems to have disappeared. Lawrence Durrell, mindful of the demise of Roman Corfu, colourfully likened this to an Ice Age settling down on the Roman Empire (Durrell 1945, 75).

How then can we characterise this Ice Age? How did it differ from the sequence of Roman urban forms spanning the first century BC to the beginnings of the seventh century AD? How was it perceived by those who lived through it? As noted, previously we have subscribed to Haldon's notion of the *kastron* as the successor to the Roman city (Hodges et al. 2004, 11), described thus (Haldon 1999, 15–16):

I would suggest that what we are confronted with here are small but distinct communities whose inhabitants regarded themselves (in one sense, that of domicile, quite legitimately) as 'citizens' of the city within whose walls their settlement was located; that the *kastron*, which retained the name of the ancient *polis*, provided a refuge in case of attack (although in many such cases it may not necessarily have been permanently occupied, still less permanently garrisoned); and that therefore many of the *poleis* of the 7th to 9th centuries survived as such because their inhabitants, living effectively in distinct villages within the area delineated by the walls, saw themselves as belonging to the *polis* itself, rather than to a village.

Within this model we saw Butrint – and presumably most of its peers in the southern Adriatic Sea area – as reduced to a castle of some kind with, perhaps, associated settlements. The archaeology tends to support this but not as we initially expected. The chance discovery of the occupation of one tower in the Western Defences led us to examine a second tower, as we have indicated; both were destroyed around AD 800, probably in some kind of attack. The ceramic and glass assemblages show far-flung connections, including southern Italy, Crete, Constantinople and the Crimea. Taken at face value, these are surely the property of either a Byzantine garrison or a small garrison drawn from local families serving the Byzantine Empire. The settlement was not restricted to the Western Defences: sporadic sherds of similar pots from the acropolis, forum, Triconch, and from the excavations at Junia Rufina (Sebastiani 2008) show that other 'households' existed on a very small scale within the abandoned fabric of the later Roman town, perhaps, as in the case of the towers, occupying rudely maintained antique buildings as opposed to erecting new ones. Certainly, the Triconch Palace excavations suggest such occupation as possibly no more than one small household for a short

period leaving minimal traces of the dwellings they occupied. Indeed, the occupation might well have been seasonal, attracted to the *kastron* when fish were readily available. In administrative, cultural and economic terms this was a very different community to the Roman town.

The attack of c. AD 800 appears to have been restricted to the Western Defences and was perhaps focused upon the elite rather than the community as a whole. The circumstances are certain to remain a matter of speculation, though the Slavic attack on Patras in AD 805 described in the Chronicle of Monemvasia offers some pointers (Curta 2004, 535). Butrint's apparent successor settlement was located in the suburb on the south side of the Vivari Channel. Again, a major building was chosen, this time a fifth- to sixth-century church built into the remains of a mid imperial Roman town house. The main dwelling was probably over the inner narthex and, measuring 7.10 x 5.80 m, amounted to approximately the same floor area as the combined three floors of each of the towers in the Western Defences. The recovery of five seals as well as the finds associated with the inhumations in the associated cemetery show that this was an elite settlement – perhaps a manor house or *oikos*, belonging to an *archon* (cf. Magdalino 1984). Connected either by boat across the Vivari Channel to the nucleus of Butrint, or less probably by the Roman bridge alongside the aqueduct, the new community presumably exercised authority over the ancient city and a small dispersed community amidst Roman remains.

It is intriguing that defence was not an obvious priority for this mid-ninth-century settlement, with the *archon* himself located outside the old fortified urban area with its inherent urban history and memories. Rather like the emporia in northern Europe which occupied new sites beyond largely abandoned Roman centres, a deliberate – if limited – investment was being made to differentiate between old (with custom and memory) and new. However, unlike the northern emporia, which were essentially 'non-places' in Marc Augé's sense (1998), associated with but not inhabited by the elite, the Butrint circumstances perhaps suggest that for several generations between c. AD 840 and 950/1000, a new Butrint, in administrative as well as economic terms, was created on the Vrina Plain. The access of this settlement to coins and a limited range of imported goods from southern Italy was mirrored by the renewed settlement in the Triconch Palace area which seems to have developed slightly later, perhaps by c. AD 900.

The Vrina Plain manor house differs markedly from the *kastron* in the Western Defences on two counts. First, some 47 *folles* and one silver *milaresion* are associated with it, dating to between c. 840 and 980. The manor was clearly the locus of some local or inter-regional

exchange mediated by imperial coinage. Second, the ceramic assemblage is overwhelmingly either south Italian – mostly transport amphorae from the Byzantine stronghold of Otranto – or local tablewares almost certainly made in the kiln found in the excavations of the manor. Now, we must bear in mind that the ceramics from the Western Defences are those frozen in a moment of ‘Pompeian time’ while the Vrina Plain assemblage is composed of ceramics disposed of over decades. This said, the differences are too great to ignore; indeed, the neatly binary character of the Vrina Plain assemblage is essentially a precursor of the predominant ceramic assemblages of the tenth to eleventh centuries noted in the intramural zone.

The subsequent revival of the old fortified area involved the refurbishment of the defences (cf. Whittow 1995; Ivison 2000), major landscaping inside the town, and the creation of walled tenemental divisions (cf. Neville 2004, 123–4). Almost certainly benefiting from markedly increased Byzantine investment in southern Italy (cf. Holmes 2005, 429–47; von Falkenhausen 2003, 147–50), early eleventh-century Butrint began to resemble the later Roman town in some of its urban characteristics, most notably in its renewed access to eastern Mediterranean trade.

The archaeology of Butrint, assembled by a mixture of strategy and serendipity, leads us to several clear observations. First, returning to Horden and Purcell’s metaphorical graph of urban and commercial life cited at the beginning of this chapter, there can be no doubt that Butrint was virtually extinguished as a city in the seventh and eighth centuries and, as in the eighteenth century when the Venetians held it against the Ottomans, was little more than a fortress with attendant households engaged in fishing. On any graph, this was not a slight dip, or trough, but a total change. Of course, it is likely that its inhabitants continued to describe the place as an ancient city much as Colonel William Martin Leake was to do after his visit in 1805 when he found a group of Ottoman fishing huts here. But in 1805 it was far removed from the Roman town as an urban place – just as it was, we now recognise, in the seventh to tenth centuries. Second, after 600 years of Roman urban continuity, the city had come to forge the cultural character of the coastal area. Roman Butrint made its centuriated landscape and in different forms retained control of this until the seventh century. The *kastron* was an altogether different settlement form, which in turn gave rise to the ninth-century manor house on the Vrina Plain. Both made use of preceding buildings, but by the ninth century there was an explicit rejection of the old walled city as a settlement (or an enforced retreat from it) and, in all likelihood, a rejection of its customs and memories.

Many questions are thrown up by these discoveries that allow us to

move beyond the reductive question of continuity versus discontinuity criticised by Haldon (2006, 607). How are we to explain the apparent absence of architecture as rhetoric during the seventh to later tenth centuries? Why did old buildings rather than new ones suffice? Why did the main administrative authority lie outside the old fortified area rather than inside it? The immutability of the orthostat walls of the early eleventh-century town suggest a colonisation of an otherwise empty townscape that markedly contrasts with the apparent fluid adaptability of the ruralised settlement sequence from the mid-sixth to the late tenth centuries. Equally, it hints at an attempted regularisation of a townscape in which intramural land had suddenly become the subject of increasing competition and demand (cf. Neville 2004, 123, noting 'the organic growth of [the Byzantine] medieval town fabric'). Then, too, there is much to consider about the pattern of burial beside the habitations, which began at the end of Late Antiquity and which persisted thereafter alongside the ninth-century manor house, and into the medieval town. Coin loss, too, begs many questions. The prolific loss of coins occurs again in the ninth- to eleventh-century settlements, but seventh- to early ninth-century coins, in common with almost all parts of the Balkans, are largely absent (cf. Curta 2006, 74–5).

In sum, there is yet much to understand about the history of Butrint (and perhaps many similar post-Roman cities) between the fifth and eleventh centuries. Nevertheless, by deploying modern archaeological methods on a major scale, we can deduce that any cultural continuity favoured in this quintessential Mediterranean context in the mid-Byzantine period was far outweighed by the degree of change, which, we argue, warrants Durrell's colourful metaphor of an Ice Age.

The sequence recovered from Butrint is a remarkable one and, without descending too far into self-congratulation, we think that it has made (and will continue to make) an important contribution to our understanding of the archaeology of this period and region. However, after 14 years of excavation and survey, what methodological lessons have we learnt? The eighth-century *kastron* of the Western Defences and the ninth- to tenth-century postulated 'Archon's House' on the Vrina Plain are arguably the sort of archaeology that we set out to find in 1994. With the benefit of hindsight is there some way that we could have adjusted our methods and strategies to find them any sooner than we did? Despite some soul searching on this point, the answer is probably no. Serendipity, as we have seen, cannot be ignored here: no clear evidence of this shifting eighth- to mid-tenth-century settlement was found in the other areas excavated during the Butrint project, although the sequences from the Vrina Plain and Western Defences now allow us to reinterpret the

fragmentary traces of this period (and their absence) noted in other areas. Other parts of this settlement likely remain to be identified, but with the exception of the remaining towers on the Western Defences, locating them would still be largely a matter of luck.

There is, however, arguably a wider methodological lesson that can be learned from the Butrint Project, albeit one that may not be of much assistance to many readers of this volume. Butrint, in many ways, was a very old-fashioned project funded by private individuals and charitable foundations to an extent and for a duration that would not be contemplated by UK Research Councils. The excavations produced colossal quantities of material, creating major issues of post-excavation management, publication and long-term finds and archive curation, and we shall be judged on our success or failure in these areas as well as by the results of the excavations. We found the Byzantine Dark Age by digging for 14 years, seven of which saw excavation on a very substantial scale, rather than via cheaper non-intrusive methods such as field survey or geophysics. While both of the latter techniques were employed within the Project, they would not have located the key deposits that we eventually found. We must conclude that although long-term large-scale excavation is by far the most costly and unfashionable of archaeological techniques currently, the results of the Butrint Project suggest that it will and should remain an essential element in the study of abandoned Roman towns.

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Chapter 9

Memory and Loss in the Late Antique Cities of Knossos and Sparta

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Suppose, for example, that the city of Sparta were to become deserted and that only the temples and foundations of buildings remained, I think that future generations would, as time passed, find it very difficult to believe that the place had really been as powerful as it was represented to be.

(Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, I. 1.10)

Introduction

Knossos and Sparta are famous names among the ancient cities of Greece, well-known to scholar and visitor alike. Yet on closer examination, how many can say that they were aware that Knossos was a flourishing Roman *colonia* and influential late antique city? Or how many who have been to Sparta have been disappointed by the lack of architectural remains of any period, but particularly the Classical, and then turned to the nearby architecturally more impressive Byzantine Mystras? Both cities have suffered from neglect of study of certain periods and cultural aspects largely due to creeping determinism, bias towards better attested periods of occupation, damning observations made by historical sources, and a certain loss of memory on a number of different levels.

Knossos and Sparta have long been considered ‘lost’ or ‘extinct’ towns for a variety of different reasons (cf. Sanders 1982; Hood and Smyth 1981; Cameron 1993, 159): post-Minoan Knossos, partly because of the archaeologists’ drive to uncover the pre-historical Minoan material at the expense of the following historical periods, and also because theories of late antique abandonment due to earthquakes had been left unquestioned; and Sparta, partly because the famous quoted words of Thucydides have meant limited motivation to seek out the location of public buildings of the Classical period and also because the ninth-to eleventh-century Chronicle of Monemvasia indicated that Sparta and many other areas of the Peloponnese were deserted in the sixth century CE in response to Slavic invasions (on Roman and pre-Roman Sparta, see Hodkinson 1998; Smith 1998; Stibbe 1998). Both late antique cities are beset by

the problem pointed out by Sanders and Slane (2005, 243–4) in regard to Corinth, namely that if the material has not been excavated or identified, then, in terms of a synthetic interpretation, to all intents and purposes it does not exist. This is certainly the case with the late antique domestic remains such as houses, industrial areas and wells of Knossos and Sparta, and yet each centre in fact features a number of Christian churches and associated cemeteries (see [Figures 9.1](#) and [9.2](#)). Defining the urban spaces has thus proved to be difficult and remains something of a fluid process still high on the agenda of academic debate (see Spieser 2001b, plus Foschia 2002; 2009; Caseau 1999). With little stratigraphically produced dating evidence, the chronologies of the multiple phases of development of urban space during Late Antiquity remain elusive. But in both Knossos and Sparta, rather than simply suggesting little is known about the cities, scholarship has turned to conjectures of abandonment or, simply, non-existence.



Figure 9.1

Significant differences in the nature of the surviving evidence, and the archaeological approaches to the sites, allow us to examine fruitfully issues of archaeologies of survival. Questioning assumptions concerning lost cities can lead to important discussions of how changes between the late antique populations and those of preceding periods may contribute to such issues – for example, if the settlement focus has changed or if there was an active process of Christianisation recognisable in terms of losing or de-memorising the pre-Christian city. It is the contention here that, in addition to practical issues of availability of land and the whim of donations, there was a conscious process of creating new memories and ritual landscapes to help Christianise and reinforce the socio-political with religious ties in the

community.

Sparta and Knossos: Differences in Evidence and Knowledge Retrieval

Theories of abandonment are somewhat dependent on a multitude of perspectives: the scholar; the sources; and the practical approach to the material. For example, most scholars concerned with Knossos examine the city from an earlier perspective than the fifth century AD; in the case of Sparta, it is principally historians, not archaeologists, who most often hypothesise on the nature of the city. In both cases personal biases unintentionally influence the interpretation of the material (see Spieser 2001b, 2). The lack of secular evidence in the cities is in part due to the nature of knowledge retrieval where more attention is given to individual monumental buildings (in this case churches) rather than broad contextualisation (ibid., 5). In terms of the wider context, although a broad knowledge of the late antique Peloponnese is available (e.g. Avraméa 1997; Vokotopoulos 1975; and see below), little work has been done on the synthetic study of late antique Crete.

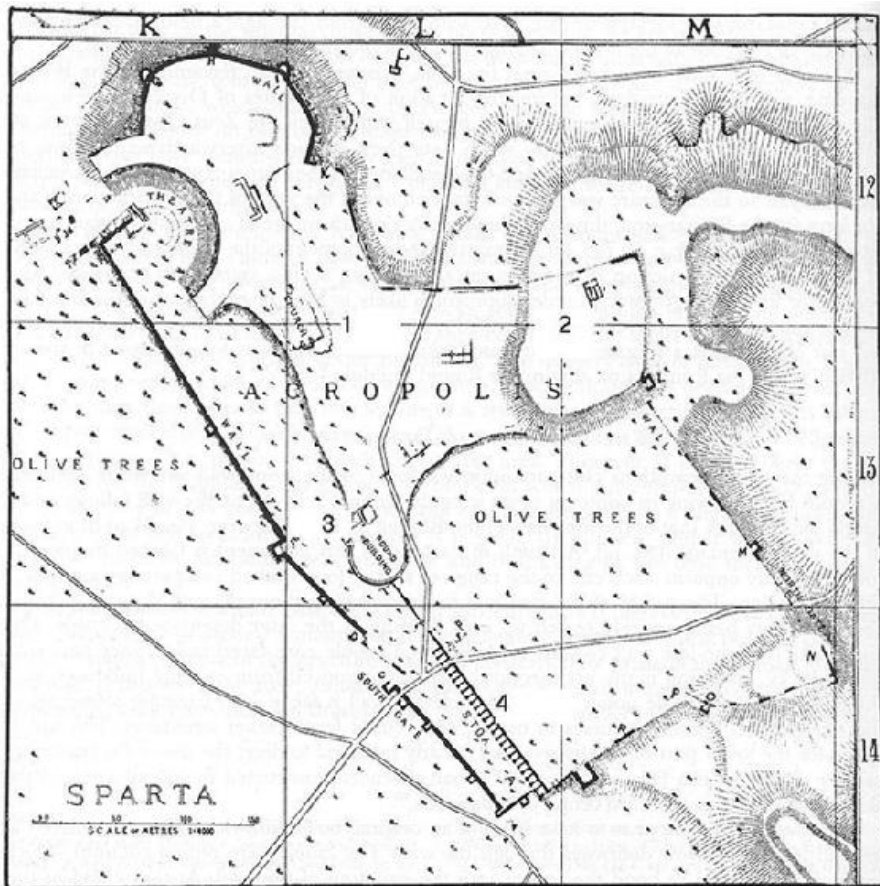


Figure 9.2 Plan of the Acropolis of Sparta (By Sejk, courtesy of the British School at Athens)

The dearth of literary sources for both Roman and late antique Knossos is problematic, but for Sparta they are more abundant, at least for the Roman period, particularly when Pausanias' *Description of Greece* is taken into account. Pausanias' accounts of the cities of Greece may not be entirely accurate, but his descriptions of the topography provide an invaluable source for the layout and nature of many second-century Greek cities. In the case of Sparta, Pausanias (*Description*, Book 3.11) reports a city densely occupied with buildings and monuments, of which few are in evidence today.

Sparta is an ever-growing conurbation in which the modern city overlies much of the ancient and significantly eclipses the archaeology. The Knossos Valley is, on the other hand, largely free of modern development (other than agriculture). Both cities have been explored to a similar extent with research and rescue excavations, although the concentration in Sparta is growing (see Cartledge and Spawforth 2002; Raftopoulou 1998). For Knossos, on the other hand,

substantial evidence for reassessing abandonment theories is available in large part from the survey work by Hood and Smyth (1981) who recorded the standing remains of the Valley (new survey work activity, overseen by Todd Whitelaw of UCL, with the British School at Athens – www.ucl.ac.uk/archaeology/project/knossos/index.htm – will no doubt expand knowledge still further). Knossos (Figure 9.1) has been the focus of more archaeological survey than Sparta (the Laconia Survey focused on less urban areas: see Cavanagh et al. 1996; 2002), but Sparta has some evidence for late antique domestic occupation whereas Knossos has little or none (see below). Knossos has detailed publications on the excavations of the late antique material (Sweetman 2004b; 2005), but Sparta has few. The different effects publication can have on general interpretation can be seen with each site: where a picture of late antique Knossos is now available showing quite a lively population resident in the fifth and sixth centuries (thus contrary to the traditional belief in abandonment), a general assumption remains for depopulation in late antique Sparta, where a concentration of temporary settlement within the safety of the walls of the Acropolis (Figure 9.2) is posited, followed by a final abandonment in the sixth century.

Approaches to the Material and Theories of Abandonment

Describing a city as abandoned due to an apparent lack of evidence creates a lost city; however, application of contemporary approaches to old material is reinvigorating studies to the point where cities once ‘lost’ are now being ‘found’. As discussed below, many of the theories concerning abandonment were presented in the context of processual archaeological practices and were perfectly reasonable in that context. We are now in a position where scholarship has progressed to enable application of new theoretical approaches to the same preserved material. The demise of Knossos was thought to have begun in the fourth century AD, apparently as a result of an earthquake, but with a final abandonment in the sixth/seventh century (Hood and Smyth 1981, 26; Sanders 1982, 14, 152; Hayes 2001, 433). Both dates are based on negative evidence – that is, a lack of domestic material. In the case of Sparta, in addition to the purported fourth- or early fifth-century destruction by Alaric (Avraméa 1997, 55, 58; Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 125–6), an abandonment is hypothetically proposed for the sixth to seventh centuries due to marauding Slavs (see Charanis 1950). As noted, problems lie in the nature of the published evidence. Data produced through rescue excavations in both cities are not fully accessible in published form, and for Sparta, many of the research excavations were undertaken in the early twentieth century, when archaeological methodologies were not so well developed. The

only late antique research excavation at Knossos is that of the Sanatorium Basilica: Frend and Johnston 1962. The KMF Basilica was excavated as part of a rescue project and while the excavators did the best they could, the circumstances under which they were excavating were such that at times the earth-movers were literally working beside them as they tried to save the archaeology (see [Figure 9.3](#)). As a result, one of the potentially most interesting late antique churches containing the earliest evidence for wall mosaics on the island has been lost save for the valiant attempts by the archaeologists to rescue as much information as they could (see Sweetman 2005). For Sparta, Raftopoulou (1998) synthesises the 1980–90s rescue excavations; on research excavations here see below.

Analysis of both Knossos and Sparta in terms of differences in settlement evidence and knowledge retrieval, plus recognition of issues of the psychological biases of creeping determinism and hindsight bias (see Hawkins and Hastie 1990; cf. Florovsky 1969), helps to redress the preconceived notions of abandonment. It is precisely because of both biases that the idea of lost periods for cities such as Knossos and Sparta have been perpetuated and left unquestioned. Recent work on late antique Knossos has redressed many of the earlier assumptions of abandonment, and a similar methodology can be applied to Sparta (e.g. Sweetman 2004a; 2004b; 2005; plus Sanders 2004 on Corinth). For both, a number of themes will be addressed below to show the following: how practical approaches to the study of these cities have perpetuated their status as *lost*; that past interpretations and historical data based on flawed assumptions should be challenged; and how questioning perceptions and new practical approaches can help to find and reconceptualise these previously lost cities. Ultimately, it is argued that late antique Sparta and Knossos have been considered ‘lost’ in part due to the attention given to their earlier and more famed periods but also because they challenge the traditional expectation that late antique cities statically maintain the same location and topography as their Roman predecessors (see discussions in Rich 1992).



Figure 9.3 *KMF Basilica, Knossos during excavation. Note the teeth marks of the earth mover across the archaeology (Image courtesy of Dr Hector Catling)*

Sparta

(i) Approaches

Excavation in ancient Sparta has been limited to two distinct areas: research excavations have focused on the Acropolis (Figure 9.2) and surrounding fields outside the modern town, while within the modern urban space, rescue excavations have dominated. This means that although the public space has been investigated in controlled conditions, attention to the domestic zones is largely haphazard (following the routes of modern development) and significantly limited because of the restrictions connected to rescue excavations. Thus, differences exist in terms of knowledge retrieval and these have a knock-on effect on the interpretation of the material. Furthermore, Late Antiquity traditionally has been sidelined in favour of the earlier and more varied Roman or classical period or the high artistic content of the Byzantine. For example, George Cuttle's aims in his 1925 excavations of the Acropolis Basilica were not to understand the late antique church but to expose the Classical temple that he believed lay below the Basilica (for details from Cuttle's site notebooks, see Sweetman and Katsara 2002). The lack of publication of the late antique or even Byzantine material found on the Acropolis from the early as well as more recent excavations automatically obscures any

post-classical survivals.

The early twentieth-century research excavations at Sparta focused on sites such as Artemis Orthia and the Sanctuary of Athena Chalcioikos, the Theatre and the Acropolis Basilica (Bosanquet 1906b; Dickins 1906; 1907; Woodward 1925; 1926; 1927) (Figure 9.2). Work was also carried out on the Baths below the Acropolis (Wace 1906, 407–14) and important studies made on the epigraphic data (NB Woodward, 1908; 1909; 1910; 1928). In the late twentieth century the Roman and late antique remains (primarily concentrated on the Acropolis) were the focus, for example the Stoa, the Theatre and the Acropolis Basilica (Waywell and Wilkes 1994; 1995; 1997; Waywell et al. 1993), as well as extensive work on the epigraphic record (Spawforth 1984; 1985; 1994; Kennell 1995).

In spite of the rich historical resources for Sparta, investigation of the material remains dating to the Classical period (with the exception of sanctuaries such as Artemis Orthia or the temple of Apollo at Amyclae) has been limited. While the remains of the later period have extensively eclipsed the earlier buildings, a significant factor in the lack of study must be the extent to which the legendary Spartan austerity has affected the way archaeologists have approached the material (Hodkinson 1998).

(ii) Abandonment and Slavic Invasions

A further case of possible misinterpretation of the evidence concerns the Slavic invasions. The evidence of the enclosure of the Spartan Acropolis has led to theories of invasion and consequently suppositions of population flight to this fortress (e.g. Cameron 1993, 159; Liebeschuetz 2001, 288; Bouras 1981, 622). This behaviourist approach of stimulus-response analysis is now considered to be misleading (see Whitley 1998, 4): other than the construction of the walls, there is little to indicate a permanent refuge was created. Furthermore, archaeologically there is little sign of population replacement by the Slavs; Barford (2001, 61, 69) cautions against the use of negative evidence and notes that although domestic architecture, mortuary and ceramic material may be lacking, the linguistic evidence does suggest some level of presence in Greece. The recovery of bow fibulae, commonly used by scholars to suggest the presence of the Slavs, has been argued by Curta (2005) to be instead indicative of contact between the Slavs and the Greek populations rather than settlement. For Sparta, it should be noted that not all scholars posit site abandonment or dramatic shrinkage. For example, Curta (2001, 142; cf. Avraméa 1997, 103) suggests that Sparta is actually unique in that a church (the Acropolis Basilica) was

constructed within the town walls in the sixth century and so implies at least some concentrated and continued activity.

(iii) Late Antique Sparta

‘The Spartan myth was now well on its way to becoming no more than a learned memory, although in Byzantine circles it would continue to provoke speculation and debate, as it does today.’ (Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 213).

In fact, when the archaeology of late antique Sparta is scrutinised, a city of some significance with material both within the Acropolis walls and in the urban space below is revealed. The late antique fortification wall was studied during the British School at Athens Sparta campaigns of the early 1900s (Traquair 1905–06); Waywell and Wilkes (1994, 423) argue convincingly that its construction came during the threat of Alaric at the end of the fourth century, in contrast with the earlier theory that it was a response to the alleged Herulian invasions (AD 267–8) (Traquair 1905–6, 428–9). The phasing of the walls indicates that they were reconstructed on several occasions and were likely in use until the thirteenth century when Mystras was constructed (this site was elevated to capital of the ‘Prince of Achaea’ during the Fourth Crusade (1202–04): Chatzidakis 2003; Waywell and Wilkes 1994, 424). Sparta’s walls, with square and round towers, enclose an area of the Acropolis roughly 500 x 300 m. The magnificent Acropolis Basilica was probably founded in the sixth century as an episcopal seat (Sweetman and Katsara 2002) (see [Figure 9.4](#)); however, the earliest known bishop, Hosius, dates from a century earlier (457) (Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 213).

Two further churches have been identified here on the Acropolis: the Stoa church and the Round Building church, both likely to be medieval, possibly tenth-century (Waywell and Wilkes 1994; Kourinou-Pikoula 1998). During the Stoa excavations, Waywell, Wilkes and Walker (1998, 89–104) revealed medieval features associated with a church and monastery and they suggested that this complex may represent the church of Osios Nikon. However, Kourinou-Pikoula (1998) prefers this as the church attached to the Round Building. The issue of the correct identification of the Basilica of Osios Nikon is embroiled in the problem of making the topography and the evidence of the ancient sources tally and has dominated much of the discussion on the town’s late antique topography. Whichever site is correct, it is clearly not the Acropolis Basilica, at least in its earliest foundation (Sweetman and Katsara 2002).

The chronology and nature of domestic occupation within the walls of the Acropolis are not easy to define without more systematic

excavations. It is unclear if, for example, the space outside the walls was Christianised and occupied earlier than the intramural space or whether they were parallel developments. Immediately to the west of the Acropolis Basilica complex, in the cavea of the Theatre, are late antique domestic remains and an ossuary which may be connected with the Basilica, but these remains have not yet been published in detail (excavations are ongoing by Catherine Morgan, Director of the BSA); the earlier excavations also revealed a 'Byzantine grave' and 'Byzantine cisterns' (Woodward 1925, 122, 179, 190). Cartledge and Spawforth's 2002 catalogue of the monuments of Roman Sparta provides an excellent resource for the city's archaeology, particularly the areas below the Acropolis walls. For other domestic sites, a later fourth-century building apparently lies on top of a Roman house in Magoula (*ibid.*, no.58); a bath, house and other building may be identified in the centre of Sparta, but definitive dates were not achieved (nos 65, 67, 76); a supposed sixth-century 'farm' is located to the east of the Acropolis (no.77); and Avraméa (1997, 185) recorded at least two mosaics dating to the fifth and sixth centuries from the town and Assimakouopoulou-Atzaka a further five (see Panayotopoulou 1998; the functions of the buildings in which the mosaics were found are not clear). Three so-called 'Public Buildings', tentatively ascribed to the late antique period, were located east of the Acropolis, in the centre and at the western edge of the modern town respectively. Three more basilicas, one a triconch building, have been exposed during rescue excavations (Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, nos.42, 43; Raftopoulou 1998, 125). Another church may cautiously be identified, reused in a later Byzantine church (no.66). Close to one of the public buildings, in the centre of the modern town, parts of a Christian cemetery were revealed.



Figure 9.4 *Acropolis Basilica, Sparta*

In terms of portable material culture, work on the late antique pottery is ongoing (by Clare Pickersgill, and by Evi Katsara and Pamela Armstrong for the Byzantine; cf. Sanders and Slane 2005) and a considerable amount of epigraphic and numismatic evidence has been recovered but not yet closely examined. A range of historical sources provide evidence for the more exciting aspects of late antique Sparta, rather than the commonplace elements of daily life. The ninth-century Chronicle of Monemvasia is a source for the Slavic invasions and Byzantine recovery of the Peloponnese. Sparta is also mentioned in Hierokles' sixth-century *Synekdemos* and the fifth-century historian Zosimus' *New History* (see Cartledge and Spawforth 2002, 124–5).

(iv) Broader Context

In terms of the broader context, of the 160 Peloponnesian churches constructed between the so-called Alaric invasions at the end of the fourth century and the creation of the *thema* of the Helladikon between 687 and 695, the majority are dated to the late fifth/early sixth century (Sweetman 2010b). Triple-aisled, single-apsed types are the most common architectural form, and within this group there is significant range in size, from the massive complex of Lechaion in the Corinthia to the much smaller example at Ay. Andreas in the Mani (Pallas 1977). Other than this group, there are numerous variations in architectural forms: from the triple-apsed type seen in the Basilica of Ayia Sofia in Korone to the triconch format to the quinqu partite transept type of the Epidavros Basilica (Stampoltzis 1976–78;

Oikonomou 1989). These 160 churches also show differences in interior décor and layout, extent, presence or absence of associated buildings and cemeteries. The evidence of ancillary buildings ranges from fully integrated baptisteries (such as at Lakkomata) to buildings for martyrion cult (Sparta Acropolis Basilica) to infrequent examples of domestic quarters (Nemea) (Sweetman and Katsara 2002; Miller 1990, 78–90). In publications of these churches, the presence of elements such as ambos, solea, doorways or screens is often noted, but their function in context is rarely discussed. There is also great variation in terms of the location of the churches: on sites with earlier cult or not (compare Epidavros and Molaoi – Oikonomou 1989), coastal or mountainous locations (compare Kenchreai and Skyllountia – Asimakopoulou-Atzaka 1987, 92–93; Rizakis 1991, 288) and as isolated examples or in discrete groups.

Knossos

(i) Approach



Figure 9.5

The archaeological approach to the Knossos Valley has been selective. The focus of research has been on the Minoan occupation and, until recently, this was often at the cost of the later historical remains. A positive side to the Minoan focus is that most areas of the valley have been given Alpha zone status, and therefore little development (other than agriculture and infrastructural amenities) has been allowed (see [Figure 9.5](#)).

With the notable exceptions of the Demeter Sanctuary, Villa Dionysos, Knossos 2000 and the Sanatorium Basilica (Coldstream 1973; Paton 1998; 2004; Wardle 1998; Frend and Johnston 1962), research excavations have been few. But various rescue excavations (largely unpublished, but see Sweetman 2004b) have revealed tantalising evidence of the Hellenistic, Roman and late antique occupation of the city. The Knossos Survey, undertaken in the 1970s and updated in the 1980s, provides a key resource for the archaeology

(including standing and excavated remains) of the valley (Hood and Smyth 1981); the authors' decision to avoid detailed identifications, dates or functions without a high degree of certainty has proven eminently sensible. But problems deriving from an incomplete archaeological record have been exacerbated by other factors. In early Knossos excavations, post-Minoan remains were commonly seen as a hindrance; the issue was even more pronounced for the Roman remains due to a traditional bias against the Romans as oppressive occupiers (see Sweetman 2007). The interpretation of the nature of Knossos in the historical periods has more often been undertaken by Knossos specialists, primarily Minoan archaeologists, rather than historical archaeologists (or even historians). With the exception of the area of the Palace, the Romans occupied the Knossos Valley extensively and intensively. Consequently, their substantial buildings, often with strong, concreted foundations would have destroyed a considerable amount of earlier occupation, particularly the Classical and Hellenistic periods, but also a great deal of Minoan material too. This perfectly normal result of successive phases has fed into the more traditional and negative interpretations of destructive Romans forcibly occupying Cretan cities like Knossos. Furthermore, the Roman period has rarely been viewed in the broader context of either Crete or the Empire as a whole – a bias changing only in recent years with work by archaeologists such as Baldwin Bowsky (1995; 2001; 2004) and Paton (1991; 1994; 1998; 2004; Paton and Schneider 1999).

Earlier publications accordingly tended to interpret events in Knossos in terms of the known historical framework. So, for example, it is known that Crete became a Roman province in 69 BC and that there was a *colonia* founded at Knossos around 27 BC (Sanders 1982). In a number of scholarly publications concerning Knossos, changes in material culture are explained in terms of these dates, socio-political changes are constructed based on these events, and descriptions such as the 'newcomers' or 'regime change' further enforce the idea of change (e.g. Coldstream 1973, 186; Sackett 1992, 465; see discussion in Sweetman 2007). This unchallenged assumption, leading to a situation of creeping determinism, has allowed such presumptions to become accepted 'facts'. Thereby these misconceptions have created a different kind of urban population from the one that, on the basis of material evidence, will have actually resided there. It is more likely that after Crete was annexed, not all areas (urban, rural or coastal) changed at the same time and for the same reasons; any kind of political, social or economic alteration in Knossos was probably gradual, with life continuing largely uninterrupted.

(ii) Abandonment and Earthquake

Key periods of misinterpretation relate to the late third to fourth and late sixth to seventh centuries when material culture that can be definitively ascribed to these periods has not been well recognised or acknowledged. Due to the perceived absence of occupation, scholars have tended to assume a desertion or severe decline of population in Knossos (e.g. Hood and Smyth 1981, 26; Hayes 2001, 433). The problem is exacerbated by the dearth of historical sources for the period: Knossos, as with Sparta, is mentioned in Hierokles' *Synekdemos*, and a record of Knossian religious behaviour comes in Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*. Thus a recent target has been to generate a more comprehensive synthetic analysis of groups of material culture (including burials) from across the city to more closely define these problematic periods and so gain an enhanced understanding of Knossos' character and its development over the full Roman and post-antique timespan.

Much weight has previously been placed on the claim of abandonment following the earthquake of AD 365 (Sanders 1982, 152). Yet the evidence shows clear fourth-century occupation in the area of the Royal Road excavations and the Demeter Sanctuary, while fourth-century tombs gather around the slopes of the valley (including the 'Mausoleum of Caiaphas') (in the Hood and Smyth Survey, fourth-century material came from KS 214–216, KS 286 and KS 57). Even more striking is the construction in the early fifth century of two large Christian basilicas (the KMF Basilica and the Sanatorium Basilica), whose innovative architectural styles and interior decoration demonstrate links with the central, southern and eastern Mediterranean (Sweetman 2004b). Their associated cemeteries give further indication of a sizeable population in Knossos in the early fifth century – inconceivable if the site had really seen dramatic abandonment after 365 (cf. Sanders' 2004 study on Corinth which neatly exposes how scholars have misattributed and misread destruction levels; he and Rothaus 2000, 16–21, dispute any long-term desertion here). In terms of the evidence for seismic events, Stiros and Papageorgiou (2001, 383–6 with Table 1) argue that in fact the west and north of Crete were relatively free of earthquakes and that for the whole island there are really only two major documented earthquakes in the Roman period: AD 46–66 and 365; a claimed third-century earthquake (c. AD 270) is not well attested. Although the 365 earthquake is an event with good supporting evidence, seismologists such as Ambraseys (2006, 1008) have observed how populations frequently return to the original occupation zone soon after even major events (modern examples of prompt resettlement include the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, the 1995 Kobe quake and the 2001 Gujarat earthquake in India). So, even if the 365 earthquake caused

widespread damage to sites on Crete, populations rarely quitted their old home sites permanently.

(iii) Late Antique Knossos

Although there is evidence for a bishop (Pinytos) as early as the late second century noted by Eusebius (*Hist. Eccl.* iv.23.7; cited by Paton 1994, 148, n. 55), it is known that Knossos sent its bishops to represent the city at the councils of Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451) and Nicaea (787) (Sweetman 2004b). While the dearth of domestic evidence makes it difficult to discuss the nature of society in Knossos in Late Antiquity, the variety of grave types and their locations allows some insight (ibid. 2005). Multiple stone-lined ossuaries in the area of the KMF Basilica (Figure 9.6) and stone tombs around the Sanatorium Basilica, for the most part oriented E–W with an absence of grave goods, illustrate the most prevalent grave types in the Knossos Valley.

The simple stone-lined cist grave was the most common type found associated with the KMF Basilica, but with most located outside the main peribolos wall. Within the wall, however, there were at least two substantial tombs, one extensively re-using the fine architectural elements from the Roman Corinthian building in the KMF site (Paton 1991). The location of the tomb in line with the peribolos wall entrance and the Basilica, in addition to the richness of the tomb type in comparison to the simple osteothekes, provides evidence for a complex stratified society; moreover, the osteology of the KMF remains reveals that some of the inhabitants at least had excellent diets and an unusually low mortality rate (see Sweetman 2005, 360–71, with Becker’s osteological analyses).

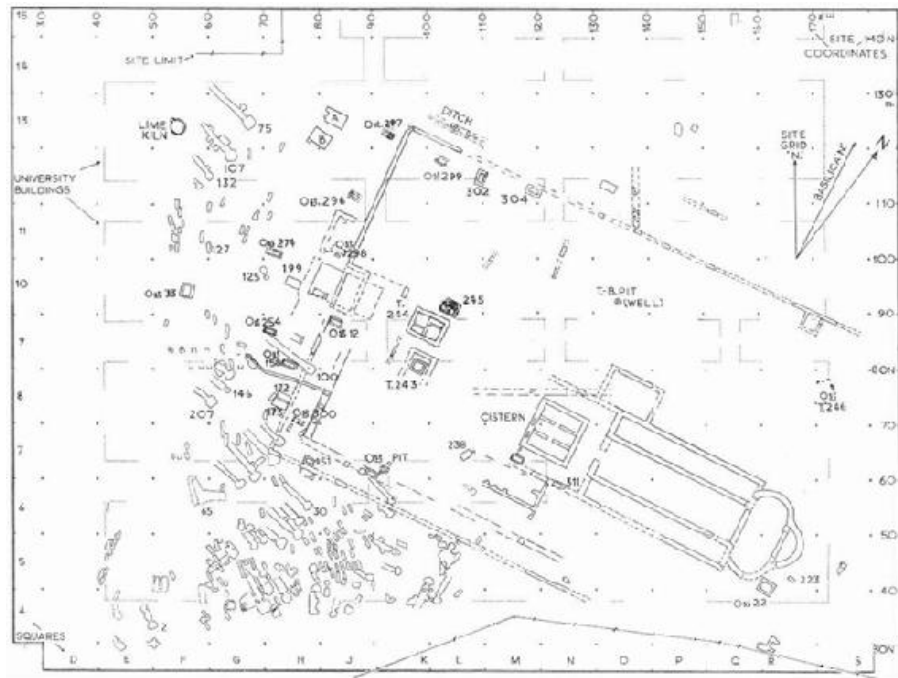


Figure 9.6 Plan of the KMF Basilica, Knossos (Courtesy of the British School at Athens)

On the basis of the distribution of the late antique graves, the perimeter line of the city may have contracted from south to north but expanded further north than the original Roman line (at the Venizelo). Rather than an intensively occupied settlement as in Roman times, occupation now may have consisted of smaller community units dispersed throughout the valley floor, gravitating towards the religious structures. This would in part explain the lack of domestic evidence for this period. Late antique tombs and multiple burials have been identified around the lower slopes of the surrounding hills, KS 279 being the southernmost location, with the northernmost being that associated with the KMF Basilica (KS 64); in the southern area, KS 183 is inserted into earlier Roman housing suggesting that this area was no longer used for habitation (Sweetman 2010a and b) (see [Figure 9.1](#)).

Solutions

Sparta and Knossos exemplify the issue of the ‘lost late antique city’ in two ways: first, the distorting effect of an academic focus on earlier periods; second, and perhaps more damaging, a lack of contextualisation of the available evidence. Thus, focusing on the dearth of domestic archaeological remains has conjured up the idea of

abandonment in spite of the visibility of monumental churches and other public, and even private, structures. In both cases, as shown above, scholars have retrospectively adapted historical evidence to explain a relative dearth of material evidence or adjusted the archaeological data to fit known historical events (notably earthquakes or invasions); this process has resulted in further loss, as such conclusions have long remained unchallenged even in the face of contradictory evidence.

(i) Theoretical Solution

As shown in the case of Knossos, a less structural methodology and an account of issues of creeping determinism and hindsight bias might lead scholars to reject abandonment theories. The methods used thus far in discussions of late antique Sparta have been quite processual, where behaviourist patterns in the material culture have been sought, primarily by the application of stimulus-response theory. Rather than seeking expected patterns, scholarship could be advanced by reading the evidence without attempting to fit it to a preconceived historical framework. Another approach, where gaps in the evidence are acknowledged and the nature of the evidence is described rather than proscriptive conclusions being presented, is one which has some merit, as seen for both Corinth and Knossos (Sanders and Slane 2005; Sweetman 2004b). Furthermore, a cognitive methodology incorporating the correction of hindsight bias could provide alternative explanations for the response-stimulus theory – for example, allowing for the possibilities of individuals or a group of people making choices or doing something irregular rather than behaving in a routine or automated manner.

(ii) Contextual Solution

A further means of understanding why cities are deemed or perceived as abandoned is to examine the broader context. Late Antiquity was initially a period of some upheaval in Greece after Theodosius I (379–95) made Christianity the state religion. During his reign, the practice of non-Christian rites, including games and the use of temples, was banned, and the final destruction of sanctuaries occurred under Theodosius II (408–50). With Greece's rich heritage of cult centres and centres of learning, Christianity's impact may have been very challenging and disruptive to both rural and urban populations and spaces. In terms of military upheavals, after the Herulian invasions (267), those that seem to have had most impact on Greece are those of the Goths in 395 and the Slavs in the 580s (cf. Curta 2001). Crete, by contrast, had little threat from invaders until the Arabs in the eighth

century.

Except for ecclesiastical buildings, the archaeology of late antique Greece has not been well explored. In spite of the wealth of art and architecture it is often described in bleak terms; finer details of chronology or efforts to understand late antique society are rarely presented although the problems are not solely due to poorly defined material evidence. For example, publications of excavated remains commonly focus on the practical details of a particular site (such as date and architectural elements) rather than a contextual interpretation of all the evidence within the surrounding landscape. Moreover, much of the analysis carried out on the late antique period has focused more on the local, and thus isolated, view rather than a more broad-ranging approach to culture and religious practice in the Mediterranean as a whole. Altogether this has led to a concentration on defining church architecture in the Peloponnese as either 'Western' or 'Eastern' with little application of a cultural analysis. Furthermore, until the recent publication by Bourbou (2004) on the data from the human remains from Eleutherna and Messene little had been done to study the nature of late antique society through mortuary evidence (cf. Sweetman 2005 for Knossos).

With the exceptions of Epirus (Bowden 2003) and the Corinthia in Achaia (Sanders 2004), a proper understanding of the provinces of Roman Greece in the fourth and fifth centuries remains elusive. For areas such as Corinth, where sizeable parts of the city have been excavated, the late antique city was thought to be well understood, particularly because of the existence of rare examples of evidence for secular structures; but even here re-assessment of the evidence has challenged established perceptions of abandonment – based mainly on a lack of ceramic data and on the belief in Slavic devastation. The comprehensive approach by Sanders and Slane (2005) for late antique Corinth offers much for reevaluating many other late antique cities in Greece: everything from numismatic data to stratigraphy from earlier excavations is subjected to a reappraisal which, in this case at least, revises older dating sequences (as for the Asclepion cemetery and the Lechaion Basilica) and firmly challenges assumptions regarding sixth-century abandonment. It is also becoming clear that seventh-century evidence is not as elusive as once believed in other areas of the Peloponnese such as the Argolid and Corinthia.

The late antique towns of Sparta and Knossos fit well into the broader context of fifth- to seventh-century Greece. Both cities have had different types of archaeological work but both have been discussed by historians or scholars of other periods, thus allowing their better known, earlier counterparts to overshadow any later cities. This is not a problem specific to these two cities, since all over

Greece, Late Antiquity has not been given the consideration it deserves. In Crete, one notable exception is Gortyn or Gortina, capital of Roman Crete, where recent excavation campaigns and analyses (building on much older work which did not explore the post-classical remains in any coherent fashion) have added much to our understanding of the articulation and character of late antique urbanism in the islands of the eastern Mediterranean (e.g. Di Vita 2004; Giorgi 2007 on water supply; and see annual reports in *Annuario della scuola archeologica di Atene e delle missioni Italiane in Oriente*). Here work is of course much aided by the lack of a modern urban successor to the Hellenistic to Byzantine seat. In the Peloponnese, studies at Corinth (see below) and the ongoing work at Sikyon will in time provide some excellent data for understanding the long term development of late antique cities.

(iii) Practical Solution

As seen for Knossos, a range of material and archaeological approaches is necessary to see the value in survey evidence and urban rescue excavation material and to facilitate its study (Sweetman 2004b). Although survey evidence may not always provide as much chronological or functional detail as desirable, it is helpful for understanding a broader context and in particular the topography of occupation. The material produced through rescue excavations necessarily has its limitations, but when taken together can provide coherent images of activity or inactivity in the urban space. For Sparta, a full topographic and archaeological survey would contribute significantly to revealing the layout and function of the Roman city seen by Pausanias (Sanders 2009) and would certainly help to understand how and why the classical city was transformed in Late Antiquity. Scattered all around the Acropolis are standing remains, some of which are identifiable as Byzantine or even late antique by their masonry styles. The Acropolis would meanwhile also benefit from an extensive geophysical survey; work carried out in 2002 in conjunction with the Acropolis Basilica Project has already revealed evidence for buildings and roads (Sweetman 2009) and additional study could clarify the nature of the post-Roman activity here.

Conclusion

Cartledge and Spawforth (2002, 213) indicate that the earliest Christianised space in Sparta lay away from the traditional non-Christian centre, as appears the case in Athens too. This is clearly also valid for Knossos, but, as argued in more detail elsewhere (Sweetman 2010b), this shifting centre may be more a result of practicalities such

as location of land donated by Christians as well as more conscious processes of de-memorisation.

These solutions are available and need to be pursued. But an immediate move should be to re-examine and interrogate the excavated remains of ecclesiastical architecture. Through architectural and topographic analyses, it may be possible to define better the roles and standing of the early Christian basilicas within communities of the Peloponnese and Crete, and by examining the connections between function, architecture, location, date and context of these churches a clearer picture of the nature of late antique society might be achieved. In examining the topography of the locations it is possible to suggest scenarios such as selection of a cult focus, avoidance of pre-Christian cult foci, availability of building materials, ideas of pilgrimage, pre-existing population spaces, relationship to route-ways, avoidance of built or agricultural land, etc. A cognitive approach to the material would allow for examination from multiple perspectives and on multiple levels – as local and national political and religious centres.

These churches should enable us to develop another key debate regarding late antique cities (and non-cities), namely our expectations of long-term continuity of settlement patterns from the Roman or even earlier Hellenistic and Classical cities. The extent to which we can assess continuity and change in the city through the late antique period for Knossos and Sparta on present evidence is difficult, although the more focused excavations in other sites in Greece such as Corinth, Athens and Gortyn are providing fruitful evidence of a changing urban landscape over the period. In some cases, such as Gortyn, changes were necessary due to natural disasters. In other cases it seems that the political and religious roles of the churches have an impact in the nature of the city in terms of when it was being Christianised in the fourth and fifth centuries to the maintenance of Christian power throughout the late fifth and sixth centuries. The re-appraisal of late antique Corinth has shown how the monumental centre of the city was refurbished in c. AD 400, if with burials in the Forum, but that the location of the late antique city marked by the Justinianic fortification wall excluded this and areas east of the Theatre. Similar shifts in late antique cities are seen for example in Gortyn, Kastelli and Chania on Crete and in Athens and Demetrius (see especially Spieser 1984). Foschia (2002) suggests that there is a general pattern of Christian occupation and monumentalisation of the suburbs in the fourth and early fifth centuries and then during the fifth century occupation of the central urban space is marked with the construction of churches there and finally pre-Christian sanctuaries are converted. Although this model may work for some cities (particularly Athens), it is certainly not the case for all Greek cities

and without focused stratigraphic excavation it is difficult to make such assertions for Sparta and Knossos as well as other urban spaces (cf. Sweetman 2010b for evidence in the Peloponnese).

The late antique city can be defined in terms of both its physical elements and its practical functions, and, in this sphere, monumental buildings particularly helped to express and define the identity of a city (Spieser 2001b, 6–8). Given that the function of the urban space and buildings alters in Late Antiquity, it should not be surprising that the topography of the city can also vary. This does not imply a radical change in the late antique city as purported by some scholars due to insecurity and unrest in the Empire (true more for the northern and western provinces – cf. Poulter 2004 and papers in Rich 1992), rather it signifies that there was a more organic adjustment to the townscapes which was in part brought about by the practicalities of accommodating the construction of the new churches and the availability of land bequeathed by Christians. Some were associated with martyr graves and as a result were often built on the edges of the earlier Roman towns (sometimes on top of the Roman cemeteries) or so as not to pollute the domestic space with the associated Christian burials. Scott (2004) has argued that the arena for conspicuous consumption changes from urban to rural space which may also mean that the more overt material evidence such as this may be absent from the urban archaeological record. At the same time, churches progressively came to enter the built urban space – especially after paganism was finally banned – starting with episcopal foundations. Both extra-and intramural foundations will have dictated significant material and mental reconfigurations of the cities and towns.

In some cases an urban shifting is quite marked (see Spieser 1984), and lack of memory or even respect for the earlier town is demonstrated by the use of the earlier domestic centres or even urban public space as cemeteries (as witnessed at Knossos, Chania and Corinth). An element of active de-memorisation may also have taken place in this period on the part of those in power who were working to Christianise the city, although we cannot easily gauge of course whether acts of Christianisation were aggressive or passive, progressive or sudden (ibid., 1–2). Social memory is defined by Aguilar (2005, 1) as follows: ‘Collective memories are given a single authoritative narrative, while social memories include all memories, even when contradictory. As a result, collective memories contribute to the process of imagining a subject, thus creating myths of nationalism and belonging, while social memories use social discontinuities that in turn produce social cohesion through an acknowledgment of social diversity and social difference (alterity)’. Where social memory can be seen as an element of political power

and directly relating to the identity of a community, a new social memory is needed when a new community is being formed. In order to make this cohesive it is useful to attempt to manipulate old social memories such as images of the past, architecture and community rituals and ceremonies (cf. Connerton 1989, 3, on routes to sustain these communal acts and memories). In some respects, the widespread closure of the classical pagan sanctuaries, games and philosophical schools can be seen as a large-scale de-memorisation on the part of the Christian emperors to help reinforce the new political regime and new religion. On a community level it is potentially quite easy to undertake a de-memorisation of the social group, in part because social memory can remain isolated within each generation, unless of course ceremonies are undertaken to actively involve several generations of the one community.

It could be argued that changes in location of the late antique city contributed to the manipulation of the earlier social memories, by creating new foci of community ceremony. In this process, earlier landscape, architectural or other visual reminders could easily be sidelined. These new foci would not only be the obvious monumental magnets of the churches, their peribolos walls and mausolea but also the cemeteries and ossuaries; the regular participation in community rituals at a church would also bind the Christianised community together. Furthermore, the location of the cemeteries at the edges of the city would help define the boundaries of the city and reinforce the areas of community ownership through repeated movement across the city to these boundary points. The change in the city would (most probably) be gradual enough to allow the population to be comfortable with it. Altogether these points would have created a different experience of the present by making the memories of the past less meaningful while still maintaining the strength of the community identity with new social memories and foci.

In these case studies, with the construction of two basilicas at the northern end of the Knossos valley, the late antique centre of this city shifted to around a kilometre north of the original Roman centre and its old forum, although the extensive occupation of the valley would have made new building in this area challenging and disruptive. While Sparta's topography is less well-known, the Roman city space probably continued to be occupied but with the enclosed space of the Acropolis now used as a place of refuge and military and administrative control. The remains of late antique mosaics and baths testify to wider ongoing occupation, though we must remain uncertain of the density of activity and of when these more elite units dissipated. Overall, therefore, when the available evidence of material culture is examined in detail, without any pre-existing bias, then both

Sparta and Knossos appear as quite flourishing communities and their churches can be seen to be built to respond to these. Current and future ceramic studies and excavations in the Peloponnese and in Crete may offer even more insights into how these communities worked and communicated and to show further that these, like other centres, were hardly 'extinct'. New archaeologies and new thinking are thus finally opening the shutters that have too long been drawn over these post-classical centres and their 'lost' populations.

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Chapter 10

Hierapolis of Phrygia: The Drawn-Out Demise of an Anatolian City

Paul Arthur

Introduction

A sea of ruins, with scattered farmhouses and nomadic shepherds, will have greeted the occasional visitor to Hierapolis between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Many centuries before it had been a thriving Roman city, a focus for wool production, teeming with merchants who plied their trade from Italy to the Orient along routes that ran west down the Meander valley to the Aegean, or east onto the Anatolian plateau and beyond (D'Andria 2003).

The site of Hierapolis ([Figure 10.1](#)) sits, almost majestically, on a limestone platform at some 350 metres above sea level, on the western edge of the Anatolian plateau, and overlooking the eminently fertile Lykos river valley, in western Asia Minor. In extent, its ruins cover almost 800,000 m² and it is clear that they must always have formed a prominent landmark. The visibility of plan, public and private space, and sprawl, is remarkable, and given the limited post-medieval and modern settlement around the former *polis*, robbing has been restricted principally to movement of stone around the site. In total, over 50 years of archaeological investigation have taken place at Hierapolis which have helped reveal the city's growth, monuments and population. The demise of the city has also gained some attention, though at first in the context of the decay of classical civilisation. As will be shown below, it is only in the last two decades of excavation and analysis that we can start to trace and understand the processes of mutation, rather than simply decline, which eventually, over the course of a thousand years, brought such a major settlement to its state of spoil and ruin, and now to a major archaeological park. This chapter explores what has been retrieved from the 'sea of ruins' so as to reconstruct an intriguing and fairly complex post-classical, Byzantine and Turkish history of Hierapolis.

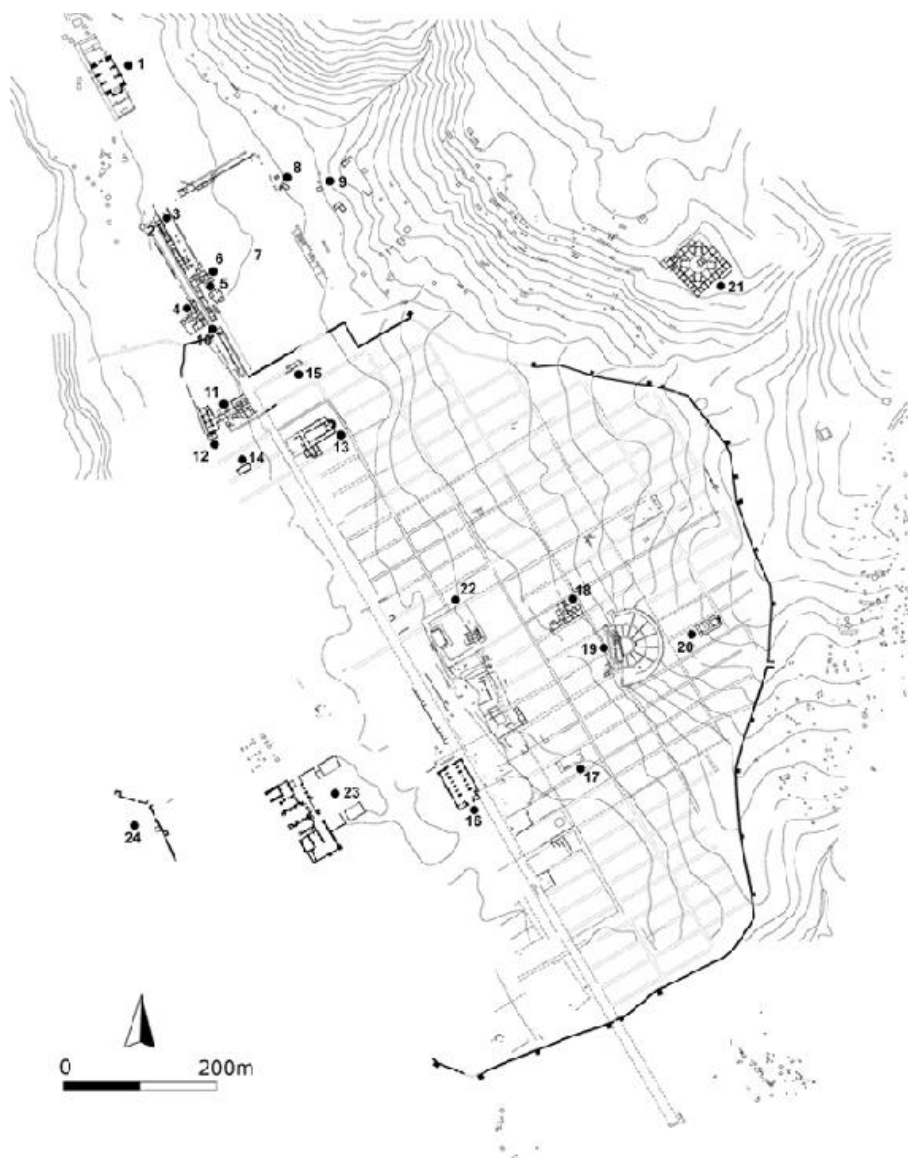


Figure 10.1 Hierapolis site plan, detailing main structures of Byzantine and Turkish date and excavation areas (see foot of chapter for additional detail)

First Discoveries and the History of Excavation

Hierapolis has, perhaps, never been lost, but through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries attracted mainly the interest of travellers and epigraphists, witnessing the first scientific study only in 1898, at the hands of C. Humann and his collaborators. However, true excavations at Hierapolis began under Paolo Verzone, first director of the Italian

Mission, in 1957. As an architect interested in early Byzantine building he began work on the martyrion of St Philip, which was soon followed by extensive work on the northern necropolis (in general, see Verzone 1978). Between 1980 and 1983 an on-site museum was established within the central Roman baths. With the death of Paolo Verzone in 1986, the directorship of the Mission was taken over by his former pupil at the Turin Polytechnic, Daria De Bernardi. She concentrated work on the definition of a general site plan and on the excavation and restoration of the theatre and of a long stretch of the main plateia, the so-called Frontinus Street, together with the Frontinus gate, all dating to Flavian times. Since 1999 Francesco D'Andria of the University of Salento has directed the Mission. In line with the policy of the Turkish government to help increment tourism, much recent work has continued to concentrate on the excavation and restoration of major monuments, including the Sanctuary of Apollo, though now within the context of an archaeological park, and supplemented with numerous research projects on various themes that include seismic history, hydrology, anthropology, ceramic studies, numismatics, epigraphy, and so forth. The Italian Archaeological Mission has provided an umbrella for the participation of numerous Italian institutions, including the Turin Polytechnic and the Universities of Salento (Lecce), Milan, Venice and Naples, as well as collaboration with foreign teams. Most recently, for instance, a Norwegian group led by Rasmus Brandt has begun research on classical burial form and customs. The Museum of Denizli also regularly carries out significant archaeological work at Hierapolis and its environs including, since 1992, the highly important excavation of the central baths (Simsek 2000).

Hierapolis in Late Antiquity

Hierapolis was founded in Hellenistic times, though evidence dating to its early phases is limited mainly to a number of tumuli, traces of a pottery workshop, and some marble *stelae*. Even late Republican and early imperial features are rare (D'Andria 2001). Indeed, it was the massive Flavian programme of urban development that gave the city its principal imprint and monumentality, which survived substantially in form, if not in character, until the seventh-century earthquake. Results of the Flavian building works are now particularly evident along the so-called Frontinus Street, the main thoroughfare crossing the town, which has been excavated and partly restored by the Italian Mission. Other major Roman monuments brought to light include the Severan theatre, parts of the enormous commercial agorà, the central baths, various nymphaea, and sections of the Sanctuary of Apollo.

Though Hierapolis was severely damaged by an earthquake already in the second half of the fourth century AD, it saw fairly swift restoration and some urban renewal, for which purposes the ruined commercial agorà became both a quarry for building stone and an industrial area for the production of ceramics, tiles, pipes and lime. The excavated kilns and waste dumps here have yielded amphorae that may well have served the regional export of local products (Mastronuzzi and Melissano 2007). Around the time of the reign of the emperor Theodosius (379–95), when many cities throughout the Empire were being called upon to provide for their own defence, a mighty wall was built to enclose much of the ancient settlement, though omitting the agorà, which had by then been converted into an industrial district. Nonetheless, at Hierapolis, civic, ecclesiastical and private building also continued apace, enhanced by its conversion into a Christian city. Within the walls a magnificent cathedral was erected, boasting newly sculpted white marble decoration of local manufacture. It was just over 48 metres in length, including the narthex, with the atrium adding on another c. 20 m. As with the various other monumental intramural churches likewise constructed and embellished between the fifth and sixth centuries, the dedication is not recorded. Nonetheless, outside the walls, on the slope above the city, architects saw to the realisation of a monumental complex dedicated to St Philip the Apostle, which included an immense martyrium formed of a square building enclosing a domed octagonal hall, reached by a bridge and a stepped processional way. In grandeur it rivalled the Church of St John at Ephesus.

Though domestic architecture of the times is less well-known, excavations by the University of Venice have brought to light two neighbouring high-status houses – labelled as the ‘House of the Ionic Capitals’ and the ‘House of the Doric Courtyard’ – both lying to the west of the Severan theatre, and both restored and restructured after the earthquake (Zaccaria Ruggiu 2007). The latter house boasted a partially subterranean room (no. A 1267) that had remains of wall painting with three lines of a psalm known as the Prayer of Manasses painted in red, probably painted on the wall during the sixth century, when the structure may even have been converted into a monastery (D’Andria et al. 2006).

Clearly, the restored city continued to thrive. Indeed, though originally a suffragan bishopric of neighbouring *Laodicea*, under the emperor Justinian, in AD 535, Hierapolis was nominated *metropolis* of the region *Phrygia Pacatiana secunda*, when the province was divided in two. At the same time *Laodicea* was losing its traditional pre-eminence and, in contrast to Hierapolis, was substantially deserted by the early years of the seventh century. The absence of any coins post-

dating the reign of the emperor Phocas (602–10) from recent excavations in the centre of *Laodicea* seems significant (Gelichi 2004; Simsek 2007). In 616 the Persians invaded a large part of Asia Minor, and may well have sacked it and other towns; indeed, numismatic evidence suggests that major fire destruction occurred at nearby *Aphrodisias*, as well as at *Ephesus* and *Sardis*, with the destroyed buildings never being rebuilt. Other scholars have advanced an alternative interpretation for all this mayhem and destruction, attributing the cause to another major earthquake (Cormack 1991, 120). Certainly, it cannot have been too long after the Persian invasion of 616 that Phrygia witnessed violent seismic activity. The striking archaeological discoveries at Hierapolis, including the collapse of major monuments such as the Nymphaeum of the Tritons upon which part of the city wall had been erected, seem far more in keeping with substantial earth tremors than with warfare, and coin dating shows that devastation cannot have taken place prior to the mid-seventh century (D'Andria 2001, 113). Whilst a coin of Heraclius (AD 610–41) was found beneath destruction rubble, the relatively common bronze coins of his successor Constans II (641–68) are absent from such layers. Above the collapsed nymphaeum a coin of Theophilus (829–42) was found (Travaglini and Camilleri 2009).

Unlike the rapid urban revival following the fourth-century earthquake, this time Hierapolis was unable to fully recover. There are no signs of major capital investment, and the absence of substantial reconstruction may have been largely a result of a failing local economy, whose effects were only compounded by the natural disaster. Urban crisis was a sign of the times, not just at Hierapolis: as John Haldon (1990) has suggested, many urban centres 'were quite simply no longer relevant to the state or to the greater part of the ruling elite', thus curtailing any substantial (renewed) public investment in reconstruction. Nonetheless, whilst even major towns like *Laodicea* were abandoned, others did survive the seventh century, sometimes as *kastra* or fortified refuge sites. Indeed, the prevailing form of settlement was based evermore on the development of smaller rural centres, governed by major landowners and monasteries. The traditional differences between rural and urban settlements became ever increasingly blurred with the development of the former and the deterioration of the latter, within a greater move towards self-sufficiency and a decline in agricultural surplus. Economic and social decline was soon followed by the decline of ecclesiastical authority at many sites to such a degree that, by the second millennium, bishops are known with sees that 'simply did not exist as centres of population' (Mitchell 1993, 121).

Tracing Middle Byzantine Hierapolis

No major monuments appear to have been built or even reconstructed at Hierapolis after the seventh-century earthquake. The cathedral, which had been severely damaged, was nonetheless eventually re-employed in reduced fashion by the ecclesiastical authorities, with the erection of two small churches in its side aisles and another attached to the southern end of the narthex, on the site of the original baptistery. Inhumation burials occupied the southern aisle of the old cathedral and the narthex proper, whilst a chamber tomb of a dignitary was built to the southern side of the apse, reusing marble fragments gathered from the fallen debris of the cathedral itself. The tomb, which was found ransacked, contained rubbish and rubble, including a marble *epistylon* from a *templon* screen, possibly belonging to the small Middle Byzantine church in the cathedral's defunct southern aisle (cf. Ritti 2007). Though these structures cannot be precisely dated because of archaeological clearance of the cathedral conducted during the 1960s and 70s (Ciotta and Palmucci Quaglino 2002), I would suggest that they are of ninth- or tenth-century date, to which period we might assign the *epistylon* on stylistic grounds.



Figure 10.2

The late fifth- or early sixth-century church above the Severan theatre was also remodelled. The old nave now housed a chapel and was blocked off from its two aisles that were subdivided into rooms of unknown function (Gullino, 2002). Another church may have existed in or around the central baths of Hierapolis, which had also been severely damaged. Early but undocumented excavations of the bathing

complex yielded a bas-relief of St John the Baptist of eighth- or ninth-century date.

Evidence for private building following the seventh-century earthquake is, instead, far more abundant, and concentrates around the main road or *plateia* in the northern part of the old city. The wide *plateia*, 'Frontinus Street', must have been one of the few areas not totally choked with rubble, which might explain why the road's paved surface and its southern pavement and portico were used as a foundation upon which to erect a whole series of small rectangular buildings, perhaps in around AD 700 (see [Figure 10.2](#)).

These buildings, composed entirely of re-used masonry, effectively restricted the width of the original thoroughfare. Here too, unfortunately, a large part of their fill had already been removed in previous excavations; nonetheless, a set of three rectangular storage bins with tiled floors was recognised, one of which still contained its original fill, and amongst the finds, apart from the marble head of a classical statue, were various almost complete vessels, including a locally-produced lead glazed chafing dish (see [Figure 10.6](#), no. 6), perhaps dating to the later eighth or ninth century, as well as a bronze key, an iron lock and various iron implements (Arthur 1997; cf. Böhlendorf Arslan 2004, 109–10, for other examples of the glazed ware). It is possible that these bins were accessed through side doors, as may be suggested by examples known in Egypt since the second millennium BC; similar square or rectangular bins are also well attested at late antique Karanis (Husselman 1979, 51, pls. 80–81).

A row of other small buildings was erected against the external side of the town walls, and one unit was even inserted into the restricted space between the gateway, which controlled movement along the Frontinus Street, and its western flanking tower; once through the gateway, yet further buildings were to be found, also erected directly upon the Roman street paving. Though these have now been recorded and removed so as to permit access for modern visitors to the site, they appear to have connected to other buildings that were unearthed in Regio II, in the area of the so-called 'Grande Edificio' or 'Roman baths' (excavation area GE). This last group, originally located during excavations carried out under Francesco d'Andria in 2001 (Caggia 2007), are so well preserved that, over the last few years, we have concentrated our excavation on the *insula*, which extends to the west of the Frontinus Street up to the Roman baths, and is defined to the south by *stenopos* 4, according to the nomenclature given to the roads by the Italian Archaeological Mission (see D'Andria et al. 2008). In this area trial excavations have been conducted to remove layers of humus, with the aim of defining the layout of the Byzantine structures superimposed on the Roman ruins. To date, some 22 rooms have been

distinguished, apparently organised around a series of courtyards and paths.

Of particular interest is the presence of house units that are similar enough as to appear to represent a standard building type. The best preserved example (see [Figure 10.3](#), property 1) consists of a rectangular room, with storage bins lodged on its eastern side. On the outside, the entrance is flanked on its east by two small stone water basins, presumably for animals, and on its west by three stone steps that clearly led to a second floor by a wooden staircase that let onto a balcony. As at Mistra and Rentina in Greece, stairs were often built against an outside wall, probably so as to save on valuable interior space. At Mastaura, further up the Meander valley, a two-storey house with a courtyard is attested in a marriage contract between Hebrew families dating to 1022 (Reinach 1924, 123, cited by Barnes and Whittow 1993). Destruction layers within the Hierapolis buildings yielded bronze coins of the emperor Constantine VII (919–20) and Constantine VII and Zoe (913–19), which, together with the pottery, may suggest that they were substantially abandoned during the course of the tenth century.

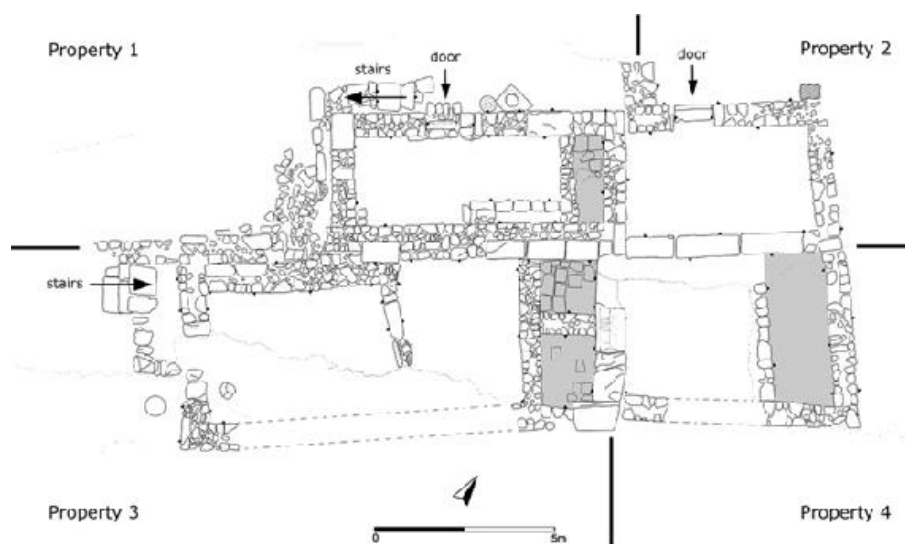


Figure 10.3 Hierapolis: House units in area GE of the excavation

A further house unit was uncovered in 2008. One of the rooms housed the remains of what seems to have been a large domed oven built of reused tiles, next to the upturned lid of an infant's sarcophagus, reused so as to provide a working surface, perhaps for kneading dough. An adjoining room revealed a work-bench above a stone paved floor, upon which was found the remains of a lead-glazed chafing dish. Another room yielded a further *folles* of Constantine VII.

On the northern side of the Frontinus Street, built parallel to the town walls, is another bath building apparently constructed in the fifth or early sixth century, having been built over the remains of the southern stoa of the commercial agorà. Excavation has revealed the *praefurnium*, together with a large hall with plastered basins and a floor supported by *suspensurae*, probably to be identified as the *calidarium*. Even though the seventh-century earthquake destroyed much of the building, some of it was later reused: four rooms in its western part show clear traces of tenth- and eleventh-century occupation, dated by ceramics and the presence of an anonymous *foliis*, perhaps struck under Romanus III (1028–34). One room was furnished with a couple of large reused stone blocks placed on the floor and a rectangular pit cut into the floor and lined with Middle Byzantine roofing tiles, perhaps for storage. A large and irregular stone-lined channel of uncertain function was cut through two of the other rooms.

At some stage during the life of this entire area a defensive wall appears to have been built, perhaps to delineate a *kastron* or citadel (Figure 10.4). Though it only came to light during the 2008 excavation season and still needs to be systematically planned and excavated, its remains would apparently delineate a continuous structure that also made use of the late antique town walls surviving just to the north of the abandoned Nymphaeum of the Tritons. The traces of the wall show that it was about 1.80 m wide and built of reused stone blocks gathered from the abandoned Roman buildings and the defunct town walls. A preliminary survey suggests that there may have been two or three entrances, two along the Frontinus Street, the northernmost being the original entrance through the town walls; the third, smaller, entrance may have been in the area of the excavations around the ‘Grande Edificio’. In this last area, archaeological remains allow us to hypothesise the remains of two small flanking towers, but their nature will need to be verified. Whether or not the wall represents the remains of a *kastron*, it brings to mind the large walled enclosure (12,327 m²) built below the Upper City of Amorium in the late tenth or early eleventh century (Lightfoot 2007, 270; Lightfoot et al. 2007).

It is worth noting that the eighth to eleventh centuries witnessed fairly local pottery production of a quite high standard at Hierapolis (Figure 10.5; cf. Cottica 1998; Arthur 2006). The most distinctive production, dating principally to the tenth and eleventh centuries, consists of large pithoi and other vessels in a highly micaceous russet or brown coloured fabric, often with applied plastic decoration in the form of finger-impressed cordons (Figure 10.6, nos. 1–2). Finer wares, usually globular flat-based ollae, but also jugs, frequently bear white

bands of over-painted decoration. Thick lead glazed wares, particularly chafing-dishes, are also common; they form part of a widespread class of glazed pottery in various fabrics, reflecting a plethora of manufacturing sites, and appear as far away as Rome and Byzantine possessions in the West, as well as at Constantinople and in the Black Sea. Such ceramics have been found at various parts of Hierapolis, including the excavation of the houses on the slopes below the Severan theatre, and around the 'Grande Edificio'. Open forms such as dishes and bowls are, instead, rare, but include occasional imports (Figure 10.6, nos. 4–5), including Constantinople-area Glazed White Ware and at least one fragment of Polychrome Ware, equally rare at *Aphrodisias* (e.g. Tomory 1980, 33). Such forms were gradually augmented, from the end of the eleventh century, by glazed bowls and dishes decorated with painted or sgraffito decoration (Figure 10.6, no. 3). Though one of the simplest artisanal skills, the professional potting should indicate demand from a stable population.

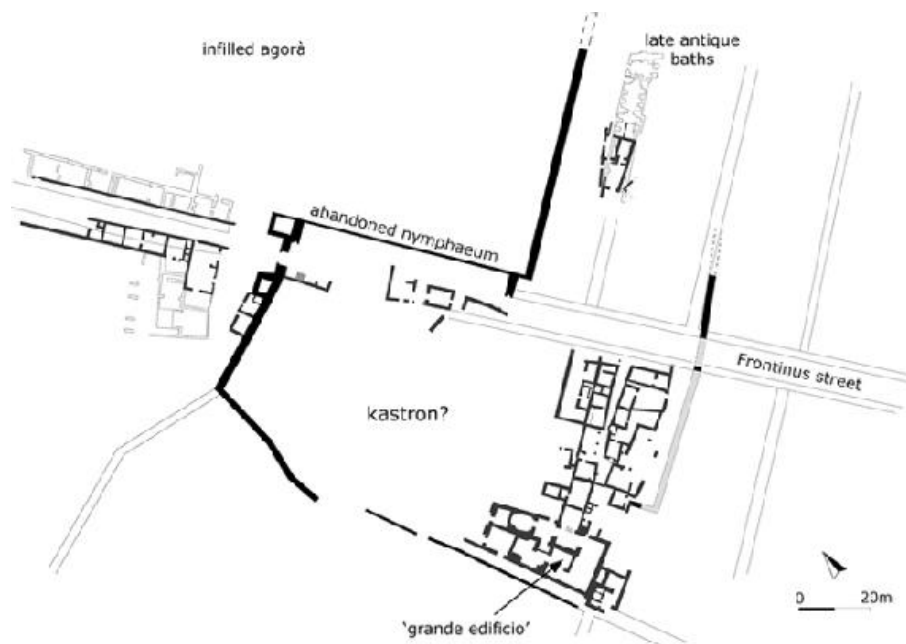


Figure 10.4 The hypothesised Byzantine *kastron*

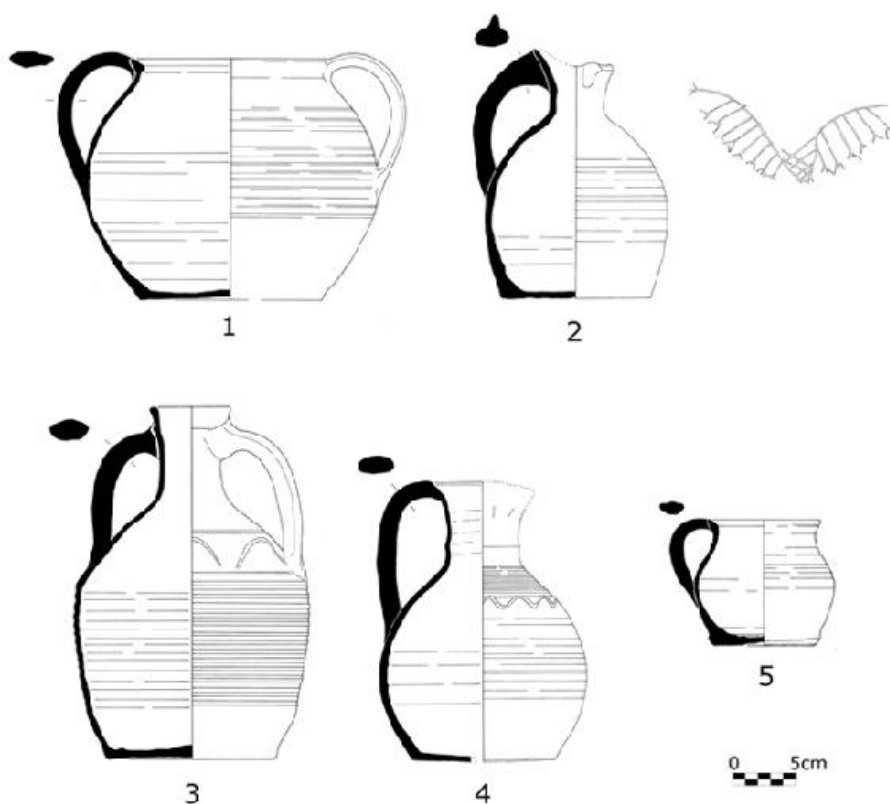


Figure 10.5 Middle Byzantine coarse ware ceramics (see foot of chapter for additional detail)

Hierapolis at the End of the First Millennium

Much of this Middle Byzantine built-up area at Hierapolis, including the apparent *kastron*, appears to have been abandoned or destroyed towards the end of the millennium. Traumatic destruction may be suggested by the evidence from excavation in 2001 of a small room that yielded a number of artefacts, including six smashed pottery vases and some iron objects that appear to have fallen from a wooden shelf; lying on the tiled floor of the room was also the intact upper half of a rotary quern. All were sealed beneath rubble. Preliminary interpretation suggests that the cause may have been yet another earthquake. The coins of Constantine VII and Zoe, Constantine VII, and an anonymous follis probably of Romanus III (1028–34), found in abandonment layers of various buildings within the area of the supposed *kastron*, may date the event to the tenth or early eleventh century. The pottery supports such a date and includes a few sherds of Glazed White Ware II (GWW II) and more abundant local lead-glazed ceramics, mainly chafing dishes (for GWW II see Hayes 1992, 18–29).

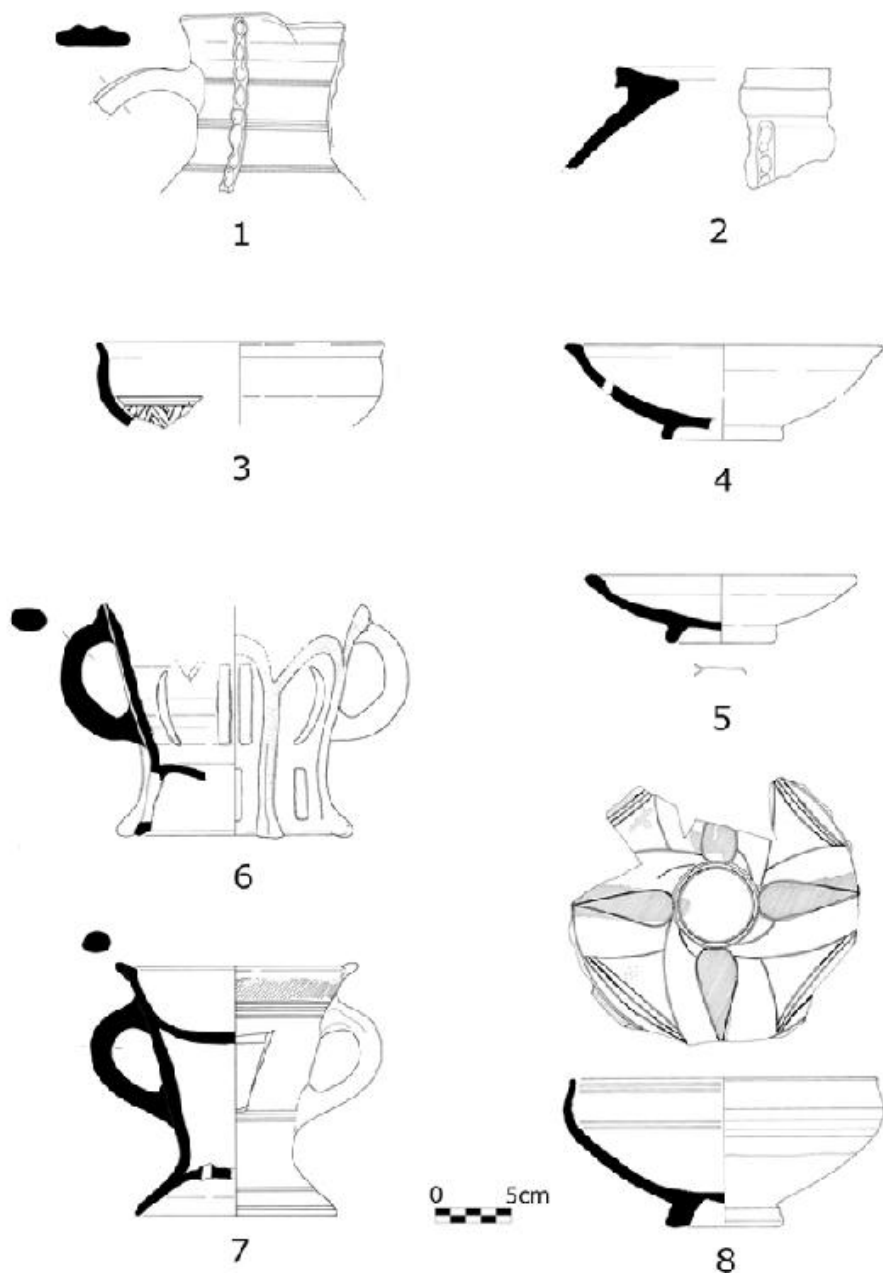


Figure 10.6 Middle Byzantine and early Turkish ceramics (see foot of chapter for additional detail)

Despite the abandonment of the houses, the area of the possible *kastron* was by no means totally deserted: fragments of twelfth-century pottery were found in the latest rubble layers of some of the houses indicating yet undefined activity; and some reconstruction of the houses lining the old Frontinus Street in front of the Nymphaeum of

the Tritons appears evident (Silvestrelli 2007). Strikingly, the upstanding ruins of the bath building were substantially re-employed: in one room a large vat built of reused facing blocks had been positioned above a limestone sarcophagus, so as to create basins for the gathering of liquid, probably olive oil, relating to a press. In the room immediately to the south an interesting structure, maybe dating to the eleventh–twelfth century, was uncovered, comprising a small basin in brickwork connected by a pipe to an underlying stone basin and clearly serving to produce liquid from solid matter, perhaps wine. It may find a parallel in a structure of fifth- to sixth-century date excavated at Sanitya on the island of Minorca (Brun 2004, 273). Three coins were discovered in nearby rubble layers, comprising a follis of Constantine VII (913–59), an anonymous follis dating to the eleventh century, and a *coppella*, maybe struck under Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) and his son Alexius IV Angelos (1203–04). In the southernmost part of the building lay three small rooms, perhaps datable to the tenth/eleventh century: one was probably a domed oven; another featured a floor made of reused tiles, and the third may have been used for storing foodstuffs.

Immediately south of the Roman baths, in the area of the old *stenopos* 4, structures relating to at least two different phases were brought to light, both of them possibly Middle Byzantine. The first shows a construction of three rooms used to house an olive press, whose press-bed (a mortared floor with tiles) and rectangular counterweight were discovered *in situ*. Perhaps by the end of the eleventh century the press was dismantled to make way for a further room constructed to lodge a large rectangular basin for a new press, probably sited above the remains of the Roman bath building. This latter basin was connected to a small decantation basin, also a re-used limestone sarcophagus. Various fragments of simple glass bracelets, of likely local manufacture, came from rubbish accumulated against the structures.

The overall story would appear to be that part of the Frontinus Street and the open area of a neighbouring gymnasium were built up during the eighth to tenth centuries, and at some point part of this built-up area was enclosed by a defensive wall. During the course of the tenth century the area was abandoned for habitation, and instead saw the installation of a series of olive and grape presses that perhaps remained in use into the twelfth century (remains of an olive-press of similar date are also known at nearby *Aphrodisias*, see Ahmet 2001).

This apparent ruralisation of the area may align with data recovered from other excavations at Hierapolis. By the end of the millennium the old commercial agorà, acting as a sediment trap, became totally filled with approximately 150,000 m³ of colluvial soil and gravel washed

down from the hills to the east, presumably indicating its general abandonment. The agorà must then have served quite effectively as farmland. Indeed, the area behind the abandoned Nymphaeum of the Tritons revealed a series of small, roughly parallel, water channels that might well have served to irrigate garden plots. They may date to about this time.

By the eleventh century much of the Frontinus Street was clearly no longer viable, being blocked with debris and soil. Just east of the defunct street a courtyard house was erected, with its gate opening onto the infilled agorà (Figure 10.7). To the immediate north of this house were a number of smaller buildings, plausibly belonging to farm labourers. The courtyard house itself recalls a series of Byzantine buildings erected on the slopes at Pergamon (Rheidt 1991).

It included one large room, which featured a beaten earth floor with a patch of stone and tile paving, on whose surface were various objects, including part of a bronze steelyard beam, a lead seal from a document depicting St Michael the Archangel on one side and St Philip on the other, as well as three bronze coins of emperors Leo VI (886–912), Michael IV (1034–41) and Constantine X (1057–59). Just beyond the room, to the west, the courtyard let onto small stables with a manger, presumably with a lean-to roof. On the opposite side of the courtyard, right of the entrance, a tile and flat stone surface with traces of burning probably represents an open hearth. Here a fragment of a silver signet-ring came to light. A range of three rooms bounded the northern side of the courtyard; the central one, perhaps a private inner courtyard, opened onto two others. The westernmost may have had a second storey, judging by the substantial walls and by what may have been the stone base for wooden steps found in its north-west corner. Potentially the upper storey was for sleeping/accommodation; while fragments of storage jars suggest that the ground floor served as storage space. The employment of roofing tiles, together with the high-status objects found, suggests that the house belonged to an important figure in the community, as most other buildings of this date, save for the churches, had flat roofs, presumably of beaten and pressed earth or canes.

We have seen how the cathedral housed a number of small church buildings in Middle Byzantine times. Another church was built, perhaps in the later tenth century, over the razed stoà on the opposite side of the agorà (excavation area BNN) (Figure 10.8).



Figure 10.7 *Reconstruction of the eleventh-century Byzantine courtyard house – FMB (Massimiliano Passarelli)*



Figure 10.8 *Hierapolis: The church and cemetery in the BNN area of excavations*

This appears to have been a funerary church sited within a sub-rectangular cemetery enclosure that contained over 84 graves, some of which were clearly reused more than once. The earliest Byzantine coin

from the area is of Constantine VII and dates to AD 945. The enclosure wall, probably later than the church, was built of stone blocks recovered from the stoà and smaller stones, all bonded with mud. A coin of Constantine X Doukas and Eudocia (1059–67) was found within its fabric. The church itself was single-aisled, with interior measurements of some 40 m², clearly for a restricted congregation. Walls reused Roman masonry with a tile-levelling course, whilst the floor was paved with Roman tiles that covered a privileged burial just within the threshold. Two stone-built benches or *subselia* were later added to either side of the nave. The rectangular architrave over the entrance bore remnants of white plaster with traces of red paint, perhaps of a cross. The church interior appears also to have been covered with white plaster. Though much of the *templon* (in wood?) was not found, its *epistylon* was recovered and found to be in marble of nearby Thiountas; it was decorated with carved flowers within a continuous interlaced rope motif. The altar, by contrast, comprised a purposefully shortened Roman marble column shaft, which supported the flat part of a reused capital to form the altar table. There is little evidence for decoration of the apse, though the discovery in and around this space of over 50 small glass paste mosaic tesserae in various shades of yellow, red, azure, blue, green and transparent with gold foil, if not enough to suggest an apse mosaic (apse mosaics in rural churches of this date would be highly unusual), might suggest a lost icon.

In a secondary phase the church was reorganised: the *templon* appears to have been dismantled, and a Roman composite capital was set upside down in the middle of the nave, its centre hollowed out, perhaps to lodge a wooden post to help support the roof. This rather suggests that the building was now precarious and, perhaps, no longer served as a church. Tiles from the pavement towards the southern end of the church were also removed. Furthermore, an irregular lean-to with a summarily paved floor was built against the façade. Perhaps just before the church's final abandonment, a hoard of five bronze coins of Constantine X Doukas (1059–67) was hidden beneath a fragment of a local storage jar.

In front of the church was a small square building, perhaps a two-floored house and watchtower of the priest. This was added in a secondary phase, as it covers at least two burials. Within was found a moulded lead cross-pendant with the words *PHOS* and *ZOE* and an anonymous bronze follis of eleventh-century date (Morrisson type pl. LXXX, n. 12). A small lean-to, perhaps used for storage and as a stable, was built against the building's western side during the life of the cemetery. On the south west of the church are remains of another small building with a tiled floor and a couple of graves – possibly a

family chapel?

The Byzantine cemetery probably housed some 200–300 individuals. The tombs are generally rectangular in form, built of stone slabs or re-used Roman tiles and capped by large stone or tile cover slabs. Many were marked with gravestones, these simply reused Roman tiles or, occasionally, roughly squared stones with a cross incised on one side. Graves often housed more than one body, sometimes stacked one on top of another, in a continuous sequence of death and burial. When the space became too cramped, some of the human remains, including skulls, were removed and re-deposited in small charnel pits to the side of the graves. Whilst the burials included men, women and children, the majority of those excavated proved to be female. Specific grave-goods are absent, though one adult female individual from tomb XIX had a small bronze cross around her neck and another had a base silver earring, while an infant burial contained a simple glass bracelet. Noteworthy is the discovery of at least three tombstones outside of the enclosure wall, along the south-east side of the cemetery; all were oriented roughly N–S, unlike the other examples discovered. Despite the presence of a cross on the tombstones, they perhaps represent the burial of Muslims or of another social group that was to be kept distinct from the burials within the cemetery enclosure.

The ceramics would suggest that the church and cemetery were laid out during the later tenth or eleventh century. Unlike a church found at Xanthos in Lycia, there is little evidence from this church at Hierapolis that it was the object of violent destruction by Seldjuk Turks. However, the chronology provided by the small hoard of coins of Constantine X Doukas might imply that the building was abandoned because of invasion of the area, following the defeat of Byzantine forces at Mantzikurt in 1071. For a very brief period, perhaps just before or after the arrival of the Turks in the Maeander valley, the church may have been used for temporary occupation. It was eventually burnt down, and the discovery of two iron arrowheads of a type common to steppe cultures might connect its final destruction to the arrival of Seldjuks or Turkomen at the site (for the type of arrowhead see Stronack 1963, 276–7, pl. 73, nos. 10–11; Kiss 1977, pl. I, no.16).

Deciphering Medieval Hierapolis

After the eleventh century, archaeological finds from Hierapolis become even more sporadic. Some traces, which require further substantiation, may indicate temporary occupation by Turkomen: the late antique baths by the old town wall, already subdivided into a

series of rooms in the tenth or eleventh centuries, yielded a pit-hearth lined with broken reused Middle Byzantine tiles; although few pit-hearths are yet documented in Asia Minor, and it is still to be proven that the Turks introduced them, examples are known at *Tarsus* and *Anemurium* (*Tarsus*: Zoroglu et al. 1998, 495 and 503, pl. 3; *Anemurium*: Russell 1982, 134). They represent a form of cooking mentioned by Mahmut el-Kasgarli in his *Divanu Lugat-i-Turk*, written in Baghdad in 1072–73. *Tandir* cooking, the process for which it was devised, consisted of cooking food gradually within a sealed pit; once sealed, water would be retained in the cooking environment, helping to reduce the long chains of indigestible fatty acids. Indeed, studies indicate that the technique was especially apt for the preparation of fibrous foods that require rather lengthy medium and high temperature cooking, for large quantities of food, and for fatty meats and plants with low sugar and starch contents (Wandsnider 1977). In various parts of the world, this type of cooking was particularly common in primitive societies, including nomads who may have had a particularly fat-free diet. Close to the pit-hearth was the rim of a chafing dish with a burnished surface (Figure 10.6, no. 7), similar to Turcoman pottery or Choma/Avlan ware as described and defined by Pamela Armstrong from Xanthos and around Balboursa in Lycia, to the south, where it is assigned to the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, or perhaps earlier (Armstrong 1998, 2001). A further, almost complete example, in similar clay fabric, was found in late buildings that occupied the area of the former Sanctuary of Apollo, in the centre of Hierapolis.

Byzantine occupation of the site appears to have continued for much of the twelfth century, even though control of the territory vacillated, as the Seldjuk Turks made ever-increasing inroads into western Asia Minor, some establishing a permanent major settlement at Konya (*Ikonium*) to the east (Figure 10.9). The upper Maeander valley was in Byzantine hands in 1098, though was lost, to be retaken under John II Comnenus in 1119, who is attested as having liberated and refortified the town of *Laodicea* (by now possibly *Ladiq*, the old centre of modern Denizli known as Kaleiçi, or in the hills at nearby Hisar köy) (Belke 1991).

Odo of Deuil narrated the advance up the Maeander valley of King Louis VII and his troops in the Second Crusade, during the inclement winter of 1147–48, depicting the area as an insecure and inhospitable borderland (see Berry 1948, 108–14). Part of Conrad III's German contingent, led by Bishop Otto of Freising, was defeated by Turkomen near *Laodicea*, the survivors escaping to the coast of Pamphylia (see Talbot Rice 1961; Mayer 1972, on the background to these episodes). The French, also continually harassed by the nomads, were instead

defeated in battle near Mount Kadmos, also not far from modern Denizli, but eventually reached security at coastal *Attaleia* (Antalya). Only a few years later Niketas Choniates was born at Chonai, a few kilometres east of Hierapolis and *Laodicea*. Despatched at an early age to study at Constantinople, he later described a campaign of the emperor Manuel Comnenus in the area in 1156: ‘The sultan (Kiliç Arslan II) continued to steal through the established system of raids. He sent selected troops to destroy Laodicea in Phrygia, which was not then as populated as it is today, nor defended by strong walls, but instead was made up of villages lying at the feet of the local mountains’ (History, IV.7.17). Around 1160, Byzantine *Laodicea* was again attacked and many of its inhabitants enslaved.

Following the defeat of Byzantine forces at Myriokephalon in 1176, the Seldjuks pushed down the Maeander valley as far as *Tralles* (modern Aydin), almost 200 km to the west of Hierapolis. In 1180 Manuel Comnenus died and much of Phrygia was soon lost to the Seldjuk Turks. Niketas Choniates recounts that in 1188 the Byzantine usurper Theodore Mangaphas seized power in nearby Philadelphia, even striking his own coinage (Hendy 1985, 438–9). When ousted by emperor Isaac Angelos in 1193, he escaped to seek refuge with Giyassedin Keyhüsrev I, the emir of *Sozopolis* (modern Borgulu), later the Seldjuk sultan. He helped Keyhüsrev conquer the upper Maeander valley, including Chonai and Ladik, these falling in 1205/06.

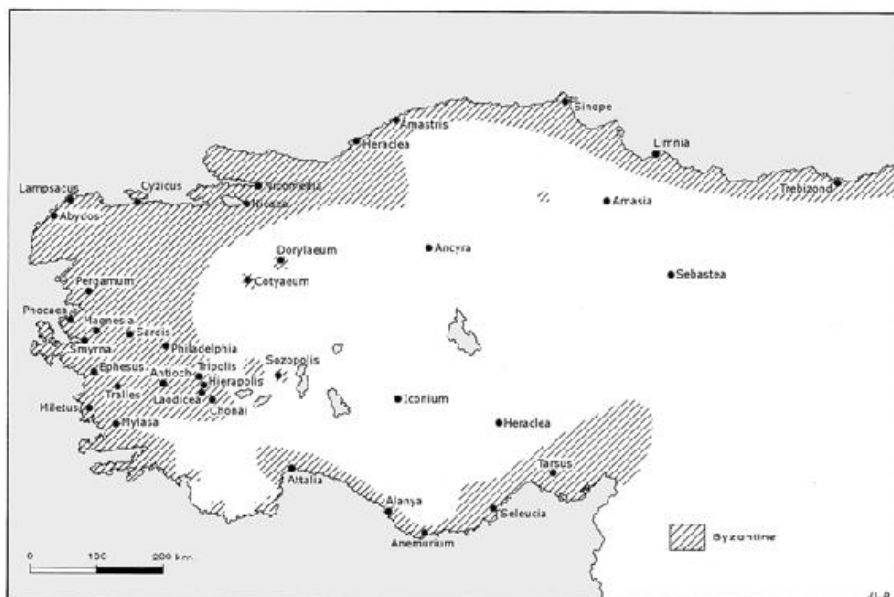


Figure 10.9 Asia Minor, maximal position of Imperial territory c. 1116–1204 (Based on Hendy 1985, map 28, with

The preceding historical account suggests that for much of the twelfth century Hierapolis and other major settlements resisted as relatively isolated island-fortresses within largely Seldjuk and Turkomen-held territory (see now Roche 2008). Archaeological finds give the impression that there was a further diminution of Hierapolis' population when compared to the relatively abundant evidence up to the later eleventh century. Strikingly, when the site was traversed by Frederick Barbarossa's Third Crusade in 1190, visited in the memory of St Philip '*cum cruce in litania majori*', it was described as '*dirutam civitatem*' (*Historia de Expeditione Friderici Imperatoris*). The martyrrium, indeed, boasts a late chapel, though its exact date has not been ascertained, and this has produced a coin of the emperor Isaac II (1185–95). Whatever the case, Hierapolis was certainly not yet totally abandoned, but must have appeared to visitors as an astonishingly interminable expanse of ruins, swamped by vegetation, with dusty, winding tracks linking patches of human settlement. Scarcely regulated water channels appear to have snaked through the ruins, some feeding small pools that were likely used to provide beverage for domestic animals. The nucleus of the remaining settlement may have been sited on the central baths, which still appeared as impressive ruins in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travellers' engravings (Figure 10.10). During his visit to the site in the early nineteenth century, Charles Fellows even thought to recognise them as the ruins of a palace (Fellows 1839, 284).

Excavations of the baths by Paolo Verzone and by archaeologists of the Museum of Denizli have revealed enticing discoveries of a final 'urban' phase at Hierapolis (Kirilova Kirova 1972; Simsek 2000). The central hall of the building appears to have been converted into a church perhaps in the sixth century; some of the structures may have then collapsed with the seventh-century earthquake, though the entire complex was substantially re-adapted in and after the eleventh century. Excavations uncovered a series of rooms divided by alleys that had been inserted within the original large vaulted chambers; these lay above a substantial layer of probable earthquake rubble that accumulated for almost 4 m above the original marble floor of the baths. Abundant Byzantine and early Turkish pottery was found, together with various coins, from issues of the emperors Michael VII Ducas (1071–78), Manuel I Comnenus (1143–80), Alexius III Angelos (1195–1203), to those of the reigns of the Seldjuk sultans Izzedin Keykavus bin Keyhüsrev (1210–19), and his successor Aleaddin Keykubat (1219–36) (Yilmaz 1994, 201–2). The pottery similarly ranges from late eleventh century to the thirteenth. Given the wealth and quality of later Byzantine finds here compared to material from

other parts of the ancient town, it is possible to suggest that the old bath building was converted into an administrative centre or market place for the late settlement. It was certainly one of the most robust buildings on the site and it is plausible that, following Seldjuk raids across Phrygia after the battle of Mantzikurt in 1071, this area survived as the centre of the residual population of Hierapolis through into early Turkish times.

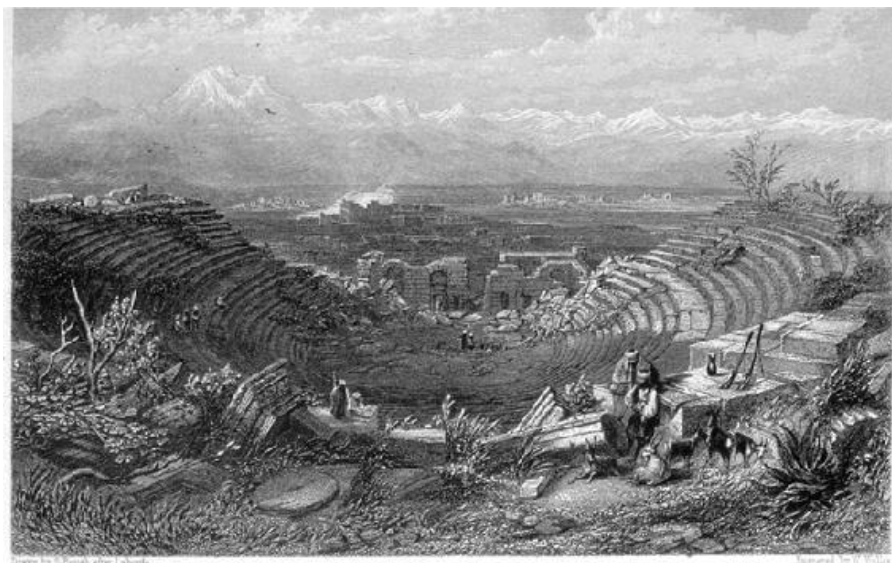


Figure 10.10 *The theatre of Hierapolis: the ruins of the baths may be seen in the middle distance. Engraving after Léon de Laborde (Voyage de l'Asie Mineure, Paris, 1838)*

Turks at Hierapolis

In 1201, with the territorial advances of Süleyman II, Giyassedin Keyhüsrev I fled to Constantinople, where he married the daughter of the Byzantine aristocrat Manuel Maurozomenes. Prior to the capture of the capital by the Western forces of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, Keyhüsrev escaped to the fortress of Maurozomenes. Following the death of Süleyman II in 1204 and the brief reign of his infant son Kiliç Arslan III, Keyhüsrev regained power and fought with Maurozomenes against the Byzantine emperor Theodore I Lascaris (1204–22). In 1206, Maurozomenes, as a Turkish vassal, obtained the territory of the upper Maeander, including both *Chonai* (Honaz) and *Laodicea*, the latter of which was still in Byzantine hands in 1190, and, quite possibly, the area of Hierapolis. His jurisdiction was recognised by a highly weakened Byzantine Empire, now centred on *Nicea* (Iznik).

Though this brief episode has not been recognised archaeologically, it was around this time that various simple round or oval rough stone footings, probably for securing tents, would appear to have been built at Hierapolis (Figure 10.11). Many examples are to be seen scattered throughout the ruins, though they are not necessarily all of the same date. Few have been excavated, though one, erected against a late Roman wall near to the 'Grande Edificio', had a rough cobbled floor, presumably intended to be covered with mats or carpets. Within was a small circular stone-lined pit, with vertical sides, perhaps a variant of the more common pit-hearth of inverted conical form. It yielded a copper coin or *fals* of the sultan Keykavus bin Keyhüsrev I (1211–20). Together with a bowl of painted sgraffito ware (Figure 10.6, no. 8) found associated with the structure, it implies an occupation dated to the early thirteenth century.

Thus, both historical and archaeological evidence suggests that from the early thirteenth century, if not slightly earlier, what remained of Hierapolis lay in Turkish hands. Sometime during the period of occupation of the central baths, it was decided to erect a fort nearby. Though there is no direct dating evidence for its construction, the most likely context is the period of attrition between the Byzantine Empire and the Seldjuks, either during the second half of the twelfth or beginning of the thirteenth century. The 'mean ruin of a modern fortress', according to Chandler (1775, 189), it is to be found perched on a tongue of land right above the natural travertine basins that overlook the village of Pamukkale and the Lykos valley. The curtain wall and three towers are relatively well preserved and bar access on the side facing the town and the baths, where there may also have been a ditch; no wall is visible where the fort meets the travertine slopes, perhaps because these provided sufficient obstacle against attack from those directions. The wall was built from reused classical remains, including column shafts that served to key the inner and outer faces. Parts still stand to their original height (> 5 m, the lower part being buried by limestone deposits), as seen by sections of the parapet with crenellations, later blocked-in with a remodelling of the upper part of the defences. Stone steps lead to the walkways along the inside of the curtain wall. The three towers, originally with at least two floors, display vertical arrow loops backed by wide embrasures crowned with pointed arches. The defensive system may have been supplemented by a free-standing tower on the other side of the ruined town, sited on a vantage point above the late antique monumental staircase that gave access to the martyrium of St Philip (*Atlante* 2008, 97).

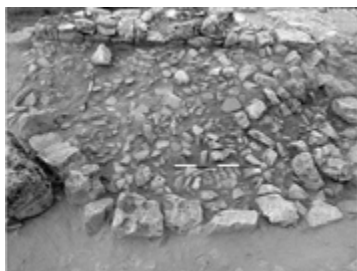


Figure 10.11

The substantial deposits of travertine that engulf the area of the fort have hampered excavation. Nonetheless, our work in 1994–95 (Arthur 2002, 223–6) brought to light the crests of walls that delimited two large rooms built against the curtain wall, and fully explored one of its three square towers (Tower A). Within this tower a thick layer of rubble covered occupation deposits and an open hearth on the ground floor; the floor comprised hard white mortar with small river pebbles. The hearth yielded both glazed and unglazed pottery, a bronze coin and animal bones of cattle, of sheep/goat and of an incredibly large wild boar. The coin with Cufic script, apparently struck by Isa Bey, the wealthy emir of Aydin, between 1360 and 1390, provides a *terminus post quem* for the destruction and abandonment of the fort. It may have been destroyed by an earthquake, as a seismic shift-slip fault was found running through the tower, breaking the reused Roman threshold block in two and creating a crack across the floor of the structure that penetrates through to the travertine below. The same crack damaged some of the stone steps leading to the ramparts.

From Fort to Farms

With the abandonment of the fort, it is difficult to argue that Hierapolis continued to be a point of reference in the settlement geography of the area. *Laodicea* had long been abandoned, and Kaleiçi/Denizli was clearly now the principal administrative, political and economic focus, straddling the main road from the Aegean coast into the interior. Indeed, Cahen (1951), in his review of the sources, viewed early Denizli as a Seljuk citadel in the early thirteenth century, before becoming centre of a Turcoman principality in 1259. Along the road were a number of caravansary, including Ak Han, built by the governor of Ladiq, Abdullah bin Karasungur in 1254, and Çardakhan, built in 1230, both recently excavated by the Turkish authorities. The rural economy at the time was based on a series of villages in the territory, about which we still know next to nothing.

Nonetheless, the ruins of Hierapolis continued to be frequented in later medieval and modern times. Sometime during the fourteenth

century a western pilgrim must have visited the ruined martyrion of St Philip and perhaps died and was buried there: excavations by a Norwegian team led by Prof. Rasmus Brandt uncovered skeletal remains in a Roman chamber tomb, amongst which were a number of lead pilgrim badges from France and Italy. It was perhaps slightly later that a dozen or so two- or three-roomed houses were erected on the slopes above the ancient city, making use of stone *spolia*. Though few objects have been recovered, the hearth of one of the houses provided a radiocarbon date of 1450–1650 cal AD. A substantial early Ottoman farm complex has also been found and excavated near the Frontinus Street. But by the eighteenth century, apart from the occasional enlightened visitor, some of whom produced intriguing and informative descriptions or etchings of the ruins, it was solely farmers, shepherds and brigands who frequented the site. On the slopes below the ruins of the ancient city, however, the new village of Pamukkale was coming into being.

Acknowledgements

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Additional Details for Figures 10.1, 10.5 and 10.6

Figure 10.1 Hierapolis site plan. The numbered sites comprise the following Byzantine and Turkish remains and excavation areas:

- The Baths Basilica

- The Frontinus gate letting onto the Frontinus Street
- Small church
- Late Roman/early Byzantine peristyle house and Middle Byzantine buildings along the Frontinus Street
- Byzantine courtyard house
- Ottoman farm building
- The commercial agorà
- Byzantine church and cemetery (excavation area BNN)
- Early Ottoman houses
- Late antique gateway
- Middle Byzantine buildings (excavation area GE)
- Byzantine presses by the 'Grande Edificio' (excavation area GE)
- The cathedral church
- Small church
- Late antique / Early Byzantine baths
- The pier church
- 'Three-aisled' church
- House of the Ionic Capitals and House of the Doric Courtyard
- Roman theatre
- The church above the theatre
- The Martyrion of St Philip
- Byzantine remains by the old Sanctuary of Apollo
- The Central Baths
- The fort

Fig. 10.5 Middle Byzantine coarse ware ceramics (for details of nos. 1–4 see Arthur and Bruno 2007, 514):

- Local cooking ware. Tenth century?
- Jug with sgraffito on shoulder. Tenth century? Compare with an example with similar decoration from Ayasoluk, Ephesus (Parman 1989, 284, Fig. 6b).
- Two-handled jug. Tenth century?
- Local fabric jug. Tenth century?
- One-handled jar or cup. Eighth–ninth century? Cf. Arthur 1997

Fig. 10.6 Middle Byzantine and early Turkish ceramics:

- Flagon in red micaceous ware. Eleventh century.
- Pithos in red micaceous ware. Eleventh century.

- Green glazed sgraffito ware bowl. Late eleventh or early twelfth century.
- Bowl in local brown micaceous fabric with a blackened rim. Tenth–eleventh century.
- Bowl in pink fabric with abundant red angular inclusions, possibly from around the Sea of Marmara. Tenth–eleventh century.
- Byzantine chafing-dish with thick lead glaze. Eighth–ninth century. Cf. Arthur 1997.
- Seldjuk chafing-dish in burnished ware. Late eleventh or twelfth century.
- Seldjuk polychrome lead glazed bowl. Early thirteenth century.

Chapter 11

Dura Deserta: The Death and Afterlife of Dura-Europos

J. A. Baird

Emenso itaque itinere bidui, prope civitatem venimus Duram desertam, marginibus amnis impositam. ‘After making a march of two days in this manner we approached the deserted city of Dura, situated on the river bank’.

(Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, XXIV.1.5)

Introduction

Dura-Europos has long been called the ‘Pompeii of the Syrian desert’ (Rostovtzeff 1938, 2; Sommer 2004, 154), and while the application of the so-called ‘Pompeii premise’ is another topic (Allison 1992; Binford 1981; Cameron 2006; Schiffer 1985), the reason the epithet has been applied to Dura is due to its supposed sudden abandonment, with its population assumed to have been deported by conquering Sasanian forces in c. AD 256 (Leriche 1996b). Little survives of contemporary textual sources which deal with Dura specifically (although see the *Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* in Potter 1990, and the ŠKZ discussed below); but from the late Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, quoted above, it is known that by AD 363 Julian was able to hunt among the abandoned ruins of the city.

The excavated domestic assemblages of Dura have recently been reconstructed from field records and notes (Baird 2006; Baird, forthcoming a); the current paper draws on this work, using not only the evidence from the houses, but also from the rest of the site, including both textual and archaeological data. A re-examination of the evidence from the excavations of the early twentieth century shows that, rather than having a simple and decisive conclusion to its occupation, Dura died a complex and prolonged death (on the afterlife of Dura in scholarship, see Baird 2012).

It is the aim of this chapter to examine the processes leading up to the end of the city of Dura-Europos, not only to determine its place in the historical narrative of the third-century AD, but also to show that the way houses are abandoned is itself culturally embedded and meaningful (Binford 1981, 200–201), and to investigate what these processes can tell us about life at Dura in the third century. In so

doing, I will also assess the archaeological evidence for the latest phases of Dura and the problems in their interpretation. It is argued here that the date usually proposed for the end of Dura is not definitive, and indeed the archaeological evidence points towards a variable abandonment of the site which was related to different communities there, military and nonmilitary. The implications of this lead us not only to rethink the end of Dura, but show that it is possible to read the settlement history of particular groups within larger urban frameworks separately as histories which are entwined but sometimes distinguishable. Finally, the occupation of the site in the centuries after its abandonment as a civic settlement will be discussed.

Archaeology at Dura

The walled area of Dura occupies c. 60 hectares on the Syrian steppe, bounded on the north and south by steep wadis and, on its eastern side, by a cliff dropping to the Euphrates and its valley below. Though noticed by earlier travellers, including Gertrude Bell, the recognition of the site as ancient and its archaeological potential were discovered by chance in 1920 (Breasted 1924, 52–3). A single day of investigations by James Breasted of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, followed (*ibid.*, 2). Subsequently more extensive excavations were carried out by the Belgian Franz Cumont in 1922–23 (Cumont 1926). Further excavations then were conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of inscriptions and letters, with M.I. Rostovtzeff and Cumont as scientific directors, which continued for 10 seasons from 1928 to 1937. The results of these excavations were published in a series of preliminary reports (starting with Baur and Rostovtzeff 1929), and some objects and structures were published as final reports, but the full publication of the site was never completed. The archive of these excavations is now primarily held in the collections of the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven, although material also survives in Damascus, Paris, and elsewhere (Gelin 1997). No work continued after the expedition was forced by financial and other pressures to cease, until a Franco-Syrian team began investigations in the mid-1980s (and published initially in the *Doura-Europos Études* series, starting with Leriche 1986). The French-Syrian expedition has focused on re-investigating the areas of the site exposed by the earlier excavations and on stabilising and preserving the remains, with limited amounts of excavation of new areas.

The orthogonally planned settlement ([Figure 11.1](#)) was revealed by the large-scale excavations of the Yale-French Academy team, who employed hundreds of local workers. The initial colony of Europos,

founded in the late fourth century BC, seems to have been focused around the citadel on the east side of the site, with the orthogonal plan and associated structures, including those of the agora, dating to the second century BC (Leriche 1996a, 158–69; Leriche 2003). Aside from the monumental fortifications of the site, little of the Hellenistic colony of Europos survives, the site having being adapted, rebuilt, and expanded to fill the area within the city walls by the Roman period. It was, for the most part, the remains of Roman period that were exposed by the Yale-French Academy team. By the third century, Dura, as it was then known, had been taken from Parthian control by the Romans, and a Roman garrison had installed itself within the city walls, on the northern side of the town (James 2007); an earlier Roman capture of the site under Trajan, as evidenced by the arch outside the city, was apparently short-lived (Baur et al. 1933, 65–68). The most famous remains uncovered – then as now – were the paintings of the house-church and synagogue, and the parchments and papyri recovered at the site (initially published in the preliminary reports, followed by Kraeling 1956; 1967; Welles et al. 1959).



Figure 11.1 Plan of Roman Dura-Europos showing blocks and extent of excavation (Image courtesy of Mission Franco-Syrienne de Europos-Doura)

Traditional Narratives and the Fall of Dura

The remains of the final battles at Dura are well known: inside the city walls, the Roman army reinforced the western fortification of the city,

which faces out to the steppe, with great amounts of mudbrick and fill. A Sasanian assault ramp on the exterior of the city wall was partially excavated (Hopkins 1947; Rostovtzeff et al. 1936, 188–205; new excavations undertaken by the current expedition on the ramp from 2008–2010 have not yet been published), as were mines and countermines, allowing for reconstructions of the siege itself (James 2004, 31–3; 2005; 2011; Leriche 1993; Lieu 2007, 46–61).

The end of Dura-Europos as an urban settlement undoubtedly happened sometime in the 250s. The date of its ultimate fall to the Sasanians is not known precisely, though authoritative accounts put it c. 256/257 (Millar 1993, 163; Sartre 2005, 349), or provisionally, earlier, in 255/256 (James 1985). Even the venerable *Cambridge Ancient History* falters on Dura's demise: a single volume gives three different years for its fall: AD 239 (*CAH* 12, 35, without reference but presumably based on a graffito from House B8-H – on which, see below); AD 253 (*ibid.*, 777, the same date as the fall of Antioch – the same page reference in *CAH* 12 gives Dura being recaptured in 254 by Valerian), and AD 256 (*ibid.*, 469, using Dura's fall on which to date the fall of Antioch). The precise moment of Dura's fall will likely never be known, but the above variations give an indication of some of the problems with dating the demise of the city: its uncertainty (which is rarely acknowledged), and elements in broader historical narratives, such as the date of the fall of Antioch, which are built upon this.

What can be examined more precisely, however, is not only the absolute chronology but the sequence of abandonment. Decades ago, Rostovtzeff argued for two Sasanian incursions, in 253 and 256 (Rostovtzeff 1943; recently supported by Sartre 2005, 349). While the dating for these incursions may indeed be challenged, the evidence for this sequence should be examined. The crucial evidence for dating Dura's fall is numismatic: specifically, coins found on soldiers thought to have fallen in the city's last stand. A group of *antoniniani* were found with corpses of Roman soldiers from inside the countermine near Tower 19 (Bellinger 1949, 187); these included 37 coins of Valerian (AD 253–260). The very latest Roman coins found at Dura were those Alfred Bellinger dated to a second emission from the mint of Antioch in the year 256, and it is these coins which were used by the Yale-French Academy team to date the fall of the city. The group of coins from which this came were classed as a hoard (labelled as hoard XVII) and were actually found on the person of a 'hastily buried soldier' (*ibid.*, 181). Problematically, this latest part of Dura's coin sequence built by Bellinger is circular in its reasoning: Dura fell in 256 according to Bellinger's interpretation of the coin evidence, but the place of finding of the coins in question (on soldiers and in hoards I and X, *under* the embankment built to reinforce the western city wall

from inside) is what Bellinger used to postulate the year of the emissions of coins from Antioch (1943, 70) – i.e. the coins which date the embankment are dated by the embankment. The coins therefore are not conclusive. And while it might be claimed that the latest Roman coins at Dura probably left Antioch's mint in early 256 (ibid., 71), even this is uncertain. What is clear is the absence of any identified issues at Dura dated to 257.

In terms of documentary sources, a crucial text for the chronology of the 250s is the so-called *Res Gestae Divi Saporis*, so named by Rostovtzeff as an analogy with the *Res Gestae* of Augustus. A trilingual document in Pehlevi, Middle Persian, and Greek from the Kabbah of Zoroaster, it records the deeds of Shapur and has long been used to help piece together third-century history here and elsewhere in the region (Huyse 1999; Olmstead 1942; Rostovtzeff 1943; Rubin 2002); now the document is more properly named for its location, Shāpūr-Ka 'ba-ye Zardošt, abbreviated ŠKZ. A place whose name is taken to accord with 'Dura' is among those listed as burned and devastated and conquered in one of Shapur's campaigns against the Romans, but there are problems with the interpretation of this text, particularly with the order in which the place names appear: specifically, Dura and Circesium do not appear immediately after Anatha where they would be expected if the list was ordered geographically. Consequently, the text does not give firm evidence of the date of Dura's fall, or even relative order in which it fell. Moreover, while it only appears once on the list, it is possible that any re-capture of the city would not have been noted on such a work of propaganda, as to have to capture the same place twice could imply failure (Edwell 2008, 87–91; Rostovtzeff 1943, 23–4 for his interpretation of the Greek part of the text).

While the coin sequence – whatever dates given to the coins of Valerian, the coin series at Dura does end with that group – might support a very abrupt end date to the Roman occupation of Dura (or, at least, to its coin supply), what will be argued below is that there is no longer any reason to think of Dura as a quickly abandoned city; indeed, there is a good chance much of the population had already left, voluntarily or otherwise, by the time of the final siege. Certainly the presence of several thousand Roman soldiers within the city's walls for at least its last four decades would have had a substantial impact (material, logistical, physical and mental) on daily life there. Coupled with the growing threat of the Sasanians, perhaps a portion of the population did not wait in the city to see who would win, as will be discussed further below. Indeed, the threat of the Sasanians is recorded in a number of graffiti from the houses – one from House B8-H says 'the Persians descended' in 239 – implying that peril was imminent (Baur et al. 1933, 112–4, no. 233b; Welles 1941, 101). The

population would have been further affected by the building of the great embankment on the interior of the fortifications, to shore up the defences of the long wall on the west side of the city, which obliterated 12 blocks of the city – although this, and, of course, the presence of an official Roman military force, may have provided a sense of greater security (if simultaneously a heightened awareness of the exposed position of the site).

The Possibility of Two Sasanian Incursions

The coin hoards at Dura are one piece of evidence which might indicate that there were two Sasanian incursions at Dura. As has been mentioned, Rostovtzeff proposed this sequence many years ago. The hoards fall roughly into two groups, one which was probably deposited in c. 253 (hoards II, VI, VII, XII, XVIII, and XX), and another in c. 256 (hoards I, V, and XVII). Of course, these dates are only probable as they are supposed from the latest coins contained within them, and so we cannot exclude the possibility that the first group was also deposited in 256. The interpretation of the coin hoards at Dura will be discussed further below, because, even if the dating of these coin groups does fall roughly into two groups, the actual circumstances of their deposition is more complicated than the label of ‘hoard’, which has been applied to them, suggests.

P. Dura 32, a document that has been put to substantial use in the writing of Dura’s history, may offer up some clues as to the nature of the city’s demise. The document records a divorce in AD 254, and in it Dura is named as ‘*Colonia Europaeorum ... the holy and friendly and autonomous*’. The translators and editors of the document themselves surmised ‘that the splendid new titles of the city in AD 254 reflect gratitude for its recovery from a brief period of Persian occupation [before the end of the city in 256]...’ (referring to arguments of Rostovtzeff 1943; Bellinger 1943; Welles et al. 1959, 6). Problematically, it is not known when Dura gained the title *colonia* (Leriche and El’Ajji 1999). At the very least, this document provides evidence that the Romans were in control (or *back* in control) of the city by 254 (P. Dura 32). The term used for ‘holy and autonomous’ (i.e. ‘inviolable’), *asylia*, is interesting: Dura passed out of Seleukid to Parthian control before this title was common among Seleukid cities in Syria; indeed, Rigsby (1996, 516–7) postulates an origin for the term at Dura as either one granted by a Parthian king or a reward by Valerian for resistance to the first (presumed) Sasanian incursion in 253.

Further evidence which has been used to argue for an initial occupation by the Sasanians before 256 comes in the form of ‘dipinti’

(painted texts) and graffiti on the famous Synagogue paintings from block L7 in the site (see [Figure 11.1](#)) (Grenet 1988, 133–58; Rostovtzeff et al. 1936, 393–5). Strikingly, several of the dipinti are dated to 253 by Sasanid regnal dates. Based on his dating of the various Iranian graffiti and dipinti from Dura, Grenet (1988) proposed an occupation at Dura of the Sasanians from 253, with a *terminus ante quem* for their departure of 30 April 254. These texts are in middle Persian and carefully painted onto a light-coloured area of the Synagogue mural. It is this careful application and content of the texts which belie the nature of the dipinti as the scrawl of looters and invaders (Baird 2010). Rather, they are carefully painted texts, some of which mention the content of the paintings, while others provide pious proclamations. If these texts were made by Iranian Jews, these people need not necessarily be associated with an invading army (MacDonald 1986).

Another important set of relevant documents – but ones ignored until relatively recently – are the Parthian and middle Persian texts from the site (P. Dura 153–5; and Harmatta 1957). While their readings are highly controversial, with different Persian scholars giving very different readings, they provide important insights (Brunner 1972). Indeed, P. Dura 154 may be the most compelling piece of evidence for an initial Sasanian incursion, being written in middle Persian and appearing to be a transport order sent by Shapur himself. Crucially, this document seems to have been found under the final siege embankment inside Dura’s city walls; this is the best evidence which exists for a pre-256 occupation of the site (James 2004). How else could a Sasanian administrative document get *beneath* the rampart? Yet even this document is inconclusive: it is poorly preserved and has been variously argued to be a fragment of a Sasanian epic, a piece of correspondence, or a text relating to the operation of a vineyard by the Persian governor of the city and by settlers placed there (Yarshater 1983, 723–4; Harmatta 1957; Welles et al. 1959, 414–7). Similarly problematic is a reading of P. Dura 155 which appears to date to as late as AD 350 despite its recovery within the rampart (Brunner 1972, 494–5, there noted as Dura parchment 38).

Despite these problems with the numismatic evidence, the coins do show a continuity in revealing that Dura (i.e. its soldiery) was not cut off from its coin supply in the years between 254 and 256, implying therefore the continued or renewed presence of the Roman military in that period (Rostovtzeff 1943, 51). Circumstantial evidence from the coins, dipinti, and papyri all indicate an initial Sasanian incursion in c. 253 and renewed Roman control of Dura between 254 and 256.

To summarise: there is evidence for Sasanians inside Dura in 253,

after which, by April 254, the Romans had regained control. This explains in part the differential abandonment of the city which will be discussed below, as perhaps at least part of the civilian population had time to prepare to leave, or indeed were deported by the withdrawing Sasanians in 254, and never returned.

Evidence for Variable Abandonment

The characterisation of the abandonment of the Dura as either rapid or prolonged is not borne out by the archaeology: the assemblages of Dura show variability in both the nature and extent of the abandonment of different parts of the city. Certainly, it would be expected that looting would have occurred after its capture and that this may well have depleted the artefact assemblages; however, while we know of systematic looting bureaucratically administered by the Sasanians generally (MacDonald 1986, 66–7; for an ancient reference to looting in this region, under Severus, see Cass. Dio 76.9), evidence for this at Dura itself is vague.

Evidence for rapid abandonment on the part of the Roman military, or of failures to quit the city, comes in the form of bodies found within the site. A soldier buried in the city's rampart has already been mentioned, and in block E8, a housing block converted for use as barracks, two bodies were found lying directly on the floor (YUAG archives: Frank Brown's field notes). Although this evidence was never published, drawings from the Yale archive showing that one of the skeletons was wearing armour and found uncovered, directly on the floor, indicate that these bodies were not 'disposed of' but rather were left where they fell, or not far from it.

In the temple thought to belong to Zeus Dolichenus, two skeletons were found lying directly on the plaster floor, and covered with earth, and two further skeletons were found in burials cut into the plaster floor (Toll 1946, 6). While these bodies had been covered, the placement of two immediately above the plaster floor indicates that this probably happened not long after the temple fell out of use. As the temple seems to have been used by the Roman army, it is assumed to have remained active until the fall of the city. Thus, these remains represent activity at the site not long before its demise, or perhaps during it.

Evidence for planned abandonment comes in several forms. Firstly we find religious sculpture deliberately broken but left *in situ* in houses – actions which also occur in the sanctuaries at Dura, where altars are deliberately broken and left *in situ* or reliefs reversed to face the wall in a process of de-sanctification. This de-sanctification happened in a number of Durene sanctuaries, indicating they were not

in use when the city fell to the Sasanians (Coqueugniot, forthcoming). In some cases, objects seem to have been removed from sanctuaries: we find, for example, a silver vessel dedicated to Zeus Theos inside a private house in block D5 (Baur et al. 1933, 229–32; Rostovtzeff 1934, 309), which might indicate caching activity.

Evidence which is indicative of a rapid abandonment occurs primarily in military contexts. Indeed, military parts of the city have further evidence for rapid abandonment when looking at the artefact assemblages. For instance, if we compare the character of the finds from a block of military barracks, E8, to those of block C3, a block of housing, this pattern is evident. In E8 there were hundreds of finds, not including coins – these include many complete objects, such as lances, daggers, knives, dozens of lamps, and many complete ceramics. By contrast, in a block of housing in the central part of the city which has no evidence for the occupation of the military, C3, there were far fewer finds, and most were fragmentary. This may indicate that those inhabitants of the city who were able to take their most valuable possessions and flee the city did so. These blocks were both excavated under the same field director in consecutive seasons, and while there are many potential reasons for the differing nature of the assemblages, this pattern is mirrored throughout the city; where there is evidence of military presence (and this extends outside of the northern half of the city where the military quarter is usually said to be confined) there is evidence of a rapid abandonment, and elsewhere in the city, the finds indicate the opposite. This can also be seen in the military use of sanctuaries such as M5, used to store artillery (Leriche and Al-Mahmoud 1994, 416–7), and in the limited evidence of fighting within the city (see below).

In addition there is the evidence of the caches of coin hoards, although, as identified, there are complications in the assumptions made in labelling these as hoards. These assumptions about the nature of hoards as evidence for the rapid abandonment at the site carry into recent work, for instance, where it is stated ‘... the Persian advance caused sufficient alarm for some of the Durenes to bury their wealth’ (Lieu 2007, 50). While kindred disciplines have developed more nuanced interpretive frameworks for the understanding of coin hoards and other types of structured deposition, Classical numismatics has a tendency to be concerned more with the coins as objects either for their own value or in economic terms, and to view all hoards as being deposited but never recovered in times of insecurity (Howgego 1995, 88–9). There has been little attempt to examine the variation of behaviours responsible for the deposition of groups of coins, or even to define what ‘makes’ a hoard. Indeed, when the Dura hoards are examined more closely and context is taken into account, we find that

these do not all actually represent the same behaviour. A 'hoard' at Dura was defined by the excavators and editors as a number of coins which were discovered together, with the size ranging from 18 coins to over 2,000. While some do appear to be coin caches, hidden in times of crises and perhaps intended to be recovered, other groups of coins are termed 'hoards' only because of the number of coins found together. For example, hoard V represents a coin purse lost in a street; traces of the fabric were still intact upon its discovery (Baur et al. 1933, 260; Bellinger 1949, 169–70; Newell 1933), and hoard II was simply a collection of coins found during the construction of the expedition house (Bellinger 1949, 166–7). Hoard VI, found sealed beneath the plaster floor of the principal room in a private house, included a gold necklace (ibid., 170; Rostovtzeff 1934, 48, 304–6), and there is a possibility that some such hoards might in fact be a type of foundation deposit rather than a method of safekeeping. Hoards I and X, found in jars in the embankment on the interior of the city, consisted of uncirculated tetradrachms and antoniniani from a variety of mints and so might represent accumulations of a soldier's pay never retrieved (Bellinger 1949, 166, 176). In any case, there are non-economic motives evident in the deposition of at least some of the hoards, be these loss, deliberate burial, or the remains of quickly buried personal coinage of soldiers, and the nature of each hoard's deposition can be highly informative as to the nature of the city's abandonment. It is instructive that the only coin groups which are real 'hoards' (in terms of apparently being buried and not retrieved in times of crisis at Dura) can be associated with the military.

The concept of *formation processes* was made famous (in American, if not 'Classical' archaeology) by Michael Schiffer in the late 1970s and early 80s (of particular relevance see Lamotta and Schiffer 1999; Schiffer 1987). In the ensuing decades, much has been written by Schiffer and others on house floor assemblages and the formation processes acting on them, which have been divided into three stages: habitation, abandonment, and post-abandonment, with accretion and depletion of artefacts being different in each stage (for a tidy summary of these processes, see [Table 2.1](#) in Lamotta and Schiffer 1999). What is implied by this is that there is such a thing as a perfect, meaningful, household assemblage (what Schiffer would call a 'systemic' assemblage) and that the objects which remain in the archaeological record have been accreted to or depleted from this ideal. The ideal archaeological situation is in this scenario 'de facto refuse', that is, deposition into the archaeological record of complete or near-complete objects where they were used or stored at the time the house was abandoned (Schiffer 1987, 89). This is best formed when sites have undergone a rapid, unplanned abandonment, though it is

admitted 'ritual behaviour' can enhance these deposits in ways which may be mistaken for de facto refuse. While Schiffer and his various co-authors cite many interesting ritual formation processes, their view is clear: things that people do to their houses after they have finished living there are outside the cultural system, and something which must be 'controlled for' when interpreting house assemblages (Lamotta and Schiffer 1999, 24). Without detracting from the importance of Schiffer's work, it is clear from it that while the use-life of a structure can continue after abandonment, abandonment itself for many archaeologists has not been seen as part of that life. This seems a bizarre position from which to operate, particularly given that so much of the material with which we work comprises 'abandonment' deposits (for an example of work on this topic in prehistory, see Stevanović 1997).

Houses make up the greatest part of ancient sites such as Dura, and as such can tell us much about them and their owners and occupants (Figure 11.2). The nature of abandonment is as important as the use-life of houses in terms of the composition and distribution of house assemblages. The ways in which people abandon their houses can accordingly give insights into aspects of culture. For instance, the destruction of household shrines carries the implication that, as observed with finds made in the temples of Dura, there was a need to de-sanctify areas of religious significance. This is important, as it might indicate that areas within houses used for cult purposes were to be treated in much the same manner as public religious areas; this, in turn, allows us to begin to access the nature of domestic religion at the site. There is a need not only to see the abandonment process as culturally meaningful, but also to see it within the cultural context in which it is carried out, if we are to understand the symbolic component of this behaviour. While a number of ethnographic studies have shown that there is a strong symbolic content in how people discard objects and abandon buildings, this is not frequently recognised in archaeological interpretation (see, for instance, the studies cited by Cameron 2006).

At Dura, we are hampered by the type of archaeology that was conducted by the excavators in the early twentieth century, although the preservation of artefact records and some photographs do allow for some assessments. For example, we would expect that those best equipped to leave the site were the wealthy inhabitants of Roman Dura. There is some evidence for this from the houses, inasmuch as there is a lack of high value objects in the assemblages from the largest of these. If indeed it is correct to correlate house size and wealth, and if Dura was very rapidly abandoned, we would expect to find a positive correlation between valuable artefacts and house size,

but this is in fact not the case. Social stratification is, in a sense, reflected in the abandonment. Overall, the resolution of the archaeology as recorded by the original excavators is not such that we can see with detail which of Dura's residents first abandoned their homes, but what can be said is that there is a pattern throughout the site in which the artefacts which indicate the most hasty abandonment can be seen in areas where the military was present. The lack of a functioning civil administration at Dura by the time it was captured by the Sasanians, and the end of the foci of some of its religious communities, is also indicated by the preservation of civic documents in 'fill' contexts, inside the rampart, on the interior of the city, which has preserved so much archaeology in its deep soils. The ramp covered many sanctuaries that were sealed off along the wall street when it was made, and the composition of the rampart itself, which (luckily for the excavators) included many parchments and papyri that had once been part of the civic archive of the site, perhaps that held in the Chreophylakeion in block G3, where niches for such documents survived (Leriche 1996a). These documents were found in the wall street, in towers of the city wall between the main gate and the third tower (T.3 on the plan). In room W13 of the Temple of Azzanathkona in block E7, which was also likely deliberately filled, portions of what had been components of the military's own archive were preserved (Welles et al. 1959, 3; on the building of the interior ramp, James 2004, 30–31 and figure 9).

The symbolic and practical consequences of the destruction of houses in the Greek world have been shown (Connor 1985). The end of a house symbolised the end of a kinship line and was therefore charged with meaning. Indeed, at Dura, for reasons we cannot be certain of, the houses were often adapted over a long period of time (although see Baird forthcoming b). In cases where excavations continued below the floor levels of the houses that were standing in the final period, the preceding structures had been razed to the ground (sometimes visible only in foundation trenches, or very fragmentary walls) before new houses were built. The documentary evidence on this topic in the East is limited, but from Dura itself it is known that houses, and in particular their place in inheritance, were tied up in kinship structures, and partible inheritance was likely reflected in changing architectural forms, with buildings and rooms being divided and re-formed for division of property between heirs (P. Dura 19; and Saliou 1992). However, aside from the artefacts from the houses, there is no evidence of destruction of the houses of the final period. They were not razed, deliberately or otherwise.

No great physical devastation of structures marked the end of the city, although many residences in the blocks adjacent to the western

wall of the city had been razed by the army at the time of the construction of the interior rampart. Instead, houses seem to have slowly collapsed: this is evident in the domestic areas excavated by modern methods under the Franco-Syrian expedition, where (for example, in block C11) preliminary analysis indicates the presence of owls (in the form of disarticulated rodent skeletons which form owl pellets) in the vacant structures before they collapsed. In the same house, a small room apparently used for storage was excavated, with almost a hundred complete ceramic vessels found, many stacked inside each other. These ceramics, comprising common wares including many cooking pots, seem to have been left *in situ* in their storage locations when the house was abandoned. While we cannot know whether such assemblages represent those things left behind by the household because they were too unwieldy or if they represent those things not desired by the city's captors (or both), in either event there seems to have been a choice that such items were to remain. While there is some evidence for limited fighting within the city (including iron bolt heads found in a city street during recent excavations; James 2007, and military equipment from within the city gates themselves, Leriche and Al-Mahmoud 1994, 416; James 2004, 31–3), there is no evidence for prolonged conflict within the city walls. Even the assemblage at Dura, problematic though it might be, can provide a more nuanced reading on the abandonment of houses at the site.

Variable abandonment, or abandonment of the site in two phases, may also explain another phenomenon at the site, namely the two types of military inhabitation. There are those groups of housing converted architecturally for military residence within the area of the Roman garrison (for instance, Houses E4 and E8), and those in the 'civilian' part of the city thought to have been commandeered for billeting (Pollard 2000, 54–6, 104–9). Houses E4 and E8, within the northern side of the site and hence the Roman military camp were substantially modified for occupation by the military. This included a number of changes, including the use of fired brick in architectural elements, increased storage capacity and increased cooking facilities (Baird 2006, 174–6). The combination of a number of grinders, mills, and ovens are indicative of an increased capacity for the production of food, with storage, milling, and ovens for the production of bread on a scale necessitated by the military, and indeed recent magnetometry work over the unexcavated portion of the northern half of the site appears to indicate a high density of hearths or ovens in this area (James et al. forthcoming).

Other houses had fewer architectural rearrangements but exhibited evidence of military occupation in the form of artefacts, graffiti, or

texts, as, for instance, in House C7-C (Baird 2010; 2011). The reason for the difference between the architecturally converted and the unconverted militarily occupied houses may, in fact, be temporal. Lacking as we do finely dated sequences it is not possible to be certain, but it could be that the structures with architectural changes can be attributed to the known Roman military building programme of the early third century (i.e. alongside and among a busy civilian population), and that those ‘unconverted’ houses postdate an initial evacuation of the city (i.e. the military spread out from their base on the north side of the city and occupied otherwise abandoned structures). This hypothesis of course rests on the problematic chronology of the site, but is strengthened by the possibility of a first Sasanian incursion and its consequences for the civilian populace. Based on all of the evidence given above, it does however seem likely that by the time of Dura’s final siege the entire site was essentially a military fortress and not a civilian settlement with an occupying Roman garrison.



Figure 11.2

Post-Abandonment Occupation

While Dura’s end as a Roman-controlled city certainly came in the mid-250s, there is substantial evidence for more ephemeral occupations after this time. A post-capture period of Sasanian occupation at Dura has been asserted by some (Yarshater 1983, 723–4), but is not generally accepted. There is in fact very little archaeological evidence for a ‘Sasanian Dura’. Excavations during 1993 in the courtyard of the expedition house exposed constructions and burials tentatively associated with a Sasanian occupation of the

site after its conquest (Saliou and Dandrau 1997, 95). Sasanian material culture was found at the site by the Yale-French Academy expedition, but the only definitive examples were recovered in the mines used in the attack on the city. For instance, in the Tower 14 mine were found two stone Sasanian lamps, of a type not found anywhere else at Dura (Baur 1947, 80). It is of course quite possible that Sasanian material in the Dura corpus has gone unrecognised, but overall it is the case that there is no sign of a significant or prolonged Sasanian presence here (see below). Whatever date the Sasanians took Dura, we can argue securely that the history of the site as an urban environment ended with its fall.

However, there is evidence for limited intermittent occupation at the site for centuries afterwards, as might be expected at a site which contained substantial re-usable building material in a defensible position adjacent to agricultural land and the Euphrates. Our understanding of any Sasanian occupation at Dura after the fall of the city is complicated by several factors, not least the lack of understanding of Sasanian material culture and building practices among the Yale-French Academy excavators. While new excavation and re-excavation has revealed what appear to be post-abandonment modifications to structures in blocks C11 and D5, these cannot be dated or attributed to the Sasanians with any certainty. The occupation of the city until 262 which was proposed by a specialist in Middle Persian on the basis of a few middle Persian *ostraka* from the site (Harmatta 1958) has been, perhaps rightly, ignored by every scholar working on Dura, yet is accepted by the authors of the *Cambridge History of Iran*. Even if these *ostraka* were Sasanian, some were in fact found in a roadway and not within buildings and thus in occupation deposits (Frye 1968, nos. 22–244; the readings are problematic – for summary of attempts see Harmatta-Pékáry 1971, 467). Furthermore, only 15 Sasanian coins have been found at Dura, of which 11 date to the reign of Shapur (Bellinger 1949, 10). Paintings within the city are sometimes attributed to Sasanian hands, but this, too, is uncertain (de Waele 2004; Goldman and Little 1980). If, therefore, there was a period in which the Sasanians occupied the site within the city walls, it was brief; any substantial occupation would be expected to leave some material residue, but as noted above, the recognised Sasanian material culture at the site is limited to the siege mines. Unfortunately, we know very little of the extent to which the use of structures inside the city by the Sasanians would have been necessary, as the large Sasanian camp outside the city has been all but destroyed by the winds of the steppe, with only traces of its outer wall, this enclosing an area fully three times as large as the city, remaining (P. Leriche, pers. comm.; Kennedy and Riley 1990, 109–

14). There is no clear evidence that robbing of architectural elements occurred at the site, as is common in post-Roman European contexts. However, it may be simply that the mudbrick and plaster that made up most of Dura's architecture would not have been productive in this regard, and the large gypsum blocks that make up the fortifications would have required concerted efforts to remove them.

There are also traces of so-called 'squatter' occupation around the main gate of the city, where a number of lamps of probable fifth-century date were found (Baur 1947, 84). Indeed, the sturdy stone masonry of the Palmyrene gate made a useful shelter into the twentieth century, and it was there that Rostovtzeff camped on his visit to Dura before the permanent expedition house was built (Hopkins 1979, 27). Among the other, scarce, evidence of later occupation at the site that can be cited is a Syriac chronicle, that of Mar Mu'ain, which says that at a site with the name of Dura, a hermit took refuge, perhaps during the reign of Constantine (Breasted 1924, 48; Cumont 1926, lxviii). The toponym (of Dura, not the Greek colonial name of Europolis) seems to have survived into the late Roman period, as seen in the opening quote of Ammianus.

Other, much later periods are also in evidence at the site: traces were reportedly found of a ninth-century occupation on the citadel; the evidence for this was not fully recorded but seems to have included modification of the standing south tower of the citadel for occupation as a shelter (Rostovtzeff 1934, 1) and a group of 12 single tombs – it is not clear from surviving documentation if the occupation and tombs were related (Toll 1946, 6–7). A fragment of 'Mussulman' ceramic of ninth- or tenth-century date was discovered in a Durene tomb and noted in the first preliminary report (Baur and Rostovtzeff 1929, 72–4), perhaps offering evidence of looting of these tombs in antiquity. Later, by the time the earliest Western maps were made of the region, a routeway (labelled as Ottoman-era by the Dura expedition) cut through the site, allowing passage from the villages in the Euphrates valley below via the south-eastern entrance to the site (circumventing the steep wadis); this road cut through the decayed remnants of one of the Roman baths and the Principia (Breasted 1924, 52). The ruins of Dura were then apparently known as *Khan Kalessi* (Geere 1904, 298–300). In the Dura archive there are many photographs of later burials from the citadel which were excavated (often labelled only 'Arab burial'); it is clear that the earlier excavators were not interested in this period and as a result these are left unrecorded save for photographs or brief mentions in reports. This lack of interest in post-Roman material may be one reason for the supposed lack of post-Roman occupation at Dura and other similar sites, with the 'archaeological record' reflecting the interests of the

excavators as much as the material in the ground (Baird 2012). The standing remains of Dura were doubtless used for a variety of purposes over the centuries; indeed, it was the shelter offered by Dura's well-preserved city walls which led to its discovery, when troops under British command engaged in fighting with Bedouin tribes took shelter here in the early twentieth century, and the spectacular paintings of the temple of Bel were revealed by their entrenchment, prompting subsequent archaeological missions to and investigations of the abandoned city (Breasted 1924).

Conclusions

Thus, some portions of the city of Dura were quickly evacuated, while others seem to have been deliberately evacuated before the final siege. This variable abandonment is important not only on terms of our understanding of the sequence of events in the mid-250s but also in terms of the understanding of the site more generally. Dura-Europos is not the Pompeii of the Syrian desert, at least in terms of its abandonment, any more than Pompeii itself is a moment frozen in time (Allison 1992). The abandonment of Dura was not as simple (and brutal) as the well-known, graphic images of the soldiers trapped in a mine during the siege of the city would suggest. At Dura, we can read in both the textual and archaeological evidence traces of the process of abandonment over a series of years. In fact, it is instructive to note that before the excavations of the Yale expedition revealed the siege works, it was said that Cumont's excavations showed that Dura's '... buildings and monuments fell gradually into decay and betray no sign of any violent overthrow or destructive conflagration' (Breasted 1924, 48). This image from within the city seems, peculiarly, to have been forgotten once a new narrative was needed when the siege ramp was uncovered during the Yale excavations, but is revealing of the complexity of the archaeology of the site.

Although Rostovtzeff had many important insights into the history and archaeology of Dura, he was fundamentally wrong with his Pompeian comparison: Dura as excavated in the 1930s was by no means a snapshot of urban life; rather, the picture recovered at Dura is one complicated by years of attacks, the presence of an intra-mural Roman garrison and accompanying population, and an abandonment sequence which will likely remain, at least partially, obscure due to the lack of more finely excavated stratigraphy. Another issue that comes up in this work is one of scale. To understand the abandonment of Dura, individual structures and their assemblages must be considered and when they are, the level of variation is evident. This variation in turn ties into larger social and historical occurrences at

the site, and feeds into the writing of a longer-term and large-scale understanding of the region. So, to begin to understand abandonment, and to use abandonment itself to understand houses, we must look at both the micro- and macro-scales.

There is evidence for an uneven end to Dura, one that affected different parts of its population in different ways at different times, and may indeed have happened over a series of years and not in one great Sasanian triumph. Some of the residents who anticipated the troubles were able to leave, others likely were not, and certainly the Roman military forces were to remain in place until the bitter end. Perhaps it was only the military, with their families and supporting personnel, who still occupied Dura in 256. While a decisive date for the fall of Roman Dura will likely never be secured, acceptance of the ambiguity is crucial not only for the history of the mid-third century but also for the interpretation of the site. We can also now see that after the abandonment of the Dura as an urban environment there was continuing activity here, even if this was relatively ephemeral compared with the previous urban settlement. The use of the toponym for Dura centuries after its abandonment shows a continuity of local knowledge that is at odds with the notion of a 'lost' city, and, despite the words of Ammianus Marcellinus, it was never quite deserted.

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Chapter 12

Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester, Hampshire, UK): An Early Medieval Extinction

Michael Fulford

Introduction

Silchester (*Calleva Atrebatum*) in Hampshire is one of a small number of Roman towns in the province of *Britannia* with either chartered status of *colonia* or *municipium*, or that of *caput civitatis*, which did not re-emerge as urban centres in the late Saxon period and continue to develop to the present day. Its comparators include Aldborough in Yorkshire (*Isurium Brigantum*), Caerwent, Gwent (south-east Wales) (*Venta Silurum*), Caistor-by-Norwich, Norfolk (*Venta Icenorum*), St Albans, Hertfordshire (*Verulamium*) and Wroxeter, Shropshire (*Viroconium Cornoviorum*). In some cases it is possible to see that the medieval and modern equivalent has developed close by the Roman centre. Most obvious here is St Albans, developing around the shrine of St Alban in the immediate suburbs of the Roman town, while the successors of Caistor and Wroxeter can be traced respectively at nearby Norwich and Shrewsbury. Aldborough and Caerwent have no obvious urban successors, though they, like all the other examples cited here, supported villages in the Middle Ages which have continued to the present day. Evidence of the medieval villages formerly associated with Caistor, Silchester and Wroxeter is distinctively represented by their respective parish churches, these in each case forming one of the very few surviving buildings of any date immediately inside or adjacent to the former Roman town walls.

Silchester lies some ten miles south of the modern town of Reading which is located on the River Thames adjacent to its confluence with a tributary, the Kennet, which rises to the west in the heart of the Wiltshire chalk. Although the reason for its precise location some distance from either the Thames or the Kennet – other than that the town occupies relatively high, and thus potentially more defensible, ground – remains obscure, it is likely that the setting in general terms has much to do with proximity to the confluence of the rivers, with the valley of the Kennet providing access to the centre of southern England and thence to the valley of the westward-flowing Avon which discharges into the Severn Estuary (Figure 12.1). The significance of a natural E–W route is reflected not only in the course of the Roman

roads, but in fact also in the modern routes of the trunk road (A4) and motorway (M4) from London to the West Country and south Wales.

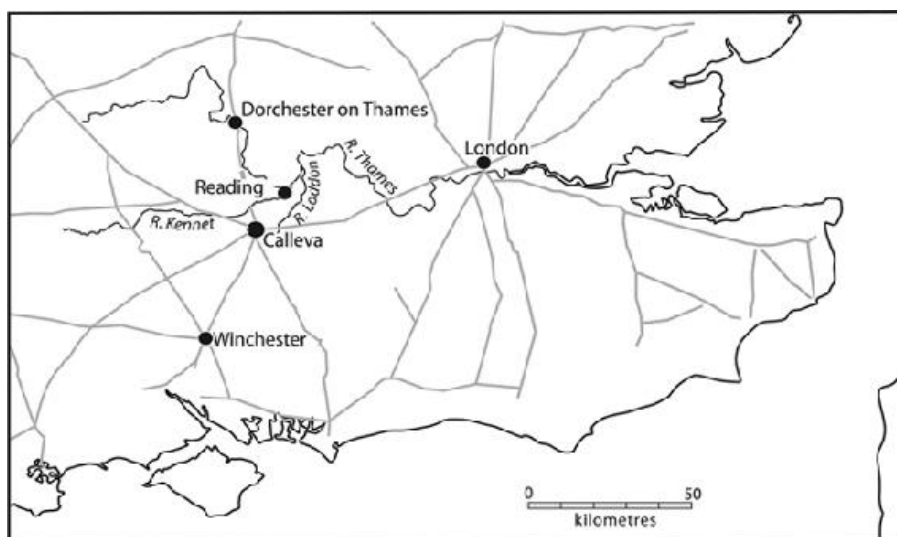


Figure 12.1 Location of Calleva (Silchester) in south-east England

Pre-Modern Explorations and Interpretations

Of all the major Roman towns which are now chiefly open, ‘greenfield’ sites, Silchester has been the most investigated. Critical in its history of investigation was the decision by the Society of Antiquaries of London to make Silchester the focus of what proved to be a 20-year project designed to reveal the complete plan of the Roman town within its defensive wall circuit (Boon 1974, 24–32; Fulford 2007, 353–6). The end result of the excavation, Fox and Hope explained in 1890, ‘will be to reveal to the world the whole life and history, as seen in its remains, of a Romano-British city’; but ‘The complete excavation of a site of 100 acres is of course a stupendous work, and the large size of the area as seen from the walls is enough to dishearten a good many people’ (Fox and Hope 1891a). Annual reports were published in *Archaeologia* (vols 52–62) between 1891 and 1910 and the overall results of this and other work at Silchester were admirably synthesised by George Boon, first in 1957, and then with extensive revisions, in 1974. The reasons for the Society of Antiquaries choosing Silchester were probably twofold: first, the walled area belonged to a single landowner, the (third) Duke of Wellington; second, the excavations conducted on behalf of the (second) Duke by the Reverend Joyce, the Rector of the adjacent parish of Stratfield Saye, in the 1860s and 70s had indicated the promise of what might

be revealed by more extensive excavation. The Wellingtons were undoubtedly extremely interested in the antiquities recovered from the excavation: not only did they retain some of the portable finds at Stratfield Saye House, but the second Duke also had two of the mosaic floors which had been excavated by Joyce relaid in the floor of the hall of the house (Neal and Cosh 2009, 192–4).

The combination of work was such that no other Roman town in Britain had been investigated to such an extent as was achieved here at Silchester by the early twentieth century. The methodology chosen by George Fox and William St John Hope, Assistant Secretary of the Society of Antiquaries, who initiated the excavations on behalf of the Society in 1890, was to cut narrow trenches, essentially the width of the person digging, at regular intervals diagonally across each *insula*, the regular, rectangular planning unit by which the town was divided (Boon 1974, 91–9) (see [Figure 12.2](#)), until stone walls were encountered. Such a methodology was designed to maximise the identification of wall foundations in alignment with the Roman street grid (see discussion in Fulford and Clarke 2002). The course of the walls of each building was then followed to define the outline plan of individual buildings, and then the interiors were cleared of soil to reveal the complete plans and the nature of floor surfaces, etc. The limits of each *insula* could be identified by the parching of the crops growing on the thinner soil above the surrounding streets. Remarkably, by 1908 all the masonry buildings within the town walls had been investigated in some fashion and the town plan was viewed as ‘complete’: ‘With the investigation of these lines of road the year’s work came to an end, and when the filling in had been finished on the 10th December, so had the complete and systematic examination of the hundred acres within the wall of *Calleva Atrebatum* which was begun in 1890’ (Hope 1909, 484) (see [Figure 12.2](#)). It is striking, however, that almost no work was undertaken outside the walls and the suburbs and cemeteries were not investigated; permission was refused to excavate the amphitheatre. Since 1909, first aerial photography (collated in Bewley and Fulford 1996), then field survey of the extramural territory (Corney 1984) and, most recently, geophysical survey (resistivity, magnetometer, georadar) (Creighton, forthcoming) have added significantly to our knowledge of both the walled town and of the extramural territory. In reality, however, a complete plan is probably unattainable, since the town was an ever-changing entity and remote sensing is not yet developed to the point when we might recognise and disentangle the plans of the town at different periods in its history.

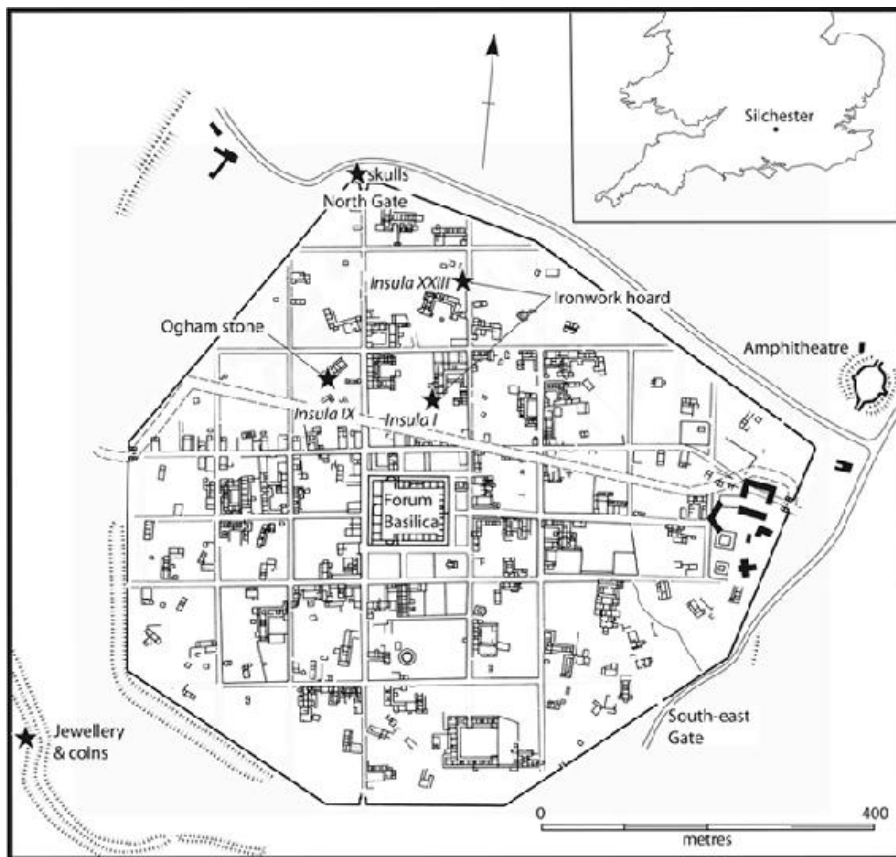


Figure 12.2 *Calleva (Silchester): the town plan at the end of the Society of Antiquaries of London excavations (1890–1909) with the locations indicated of the latest Roman/sub-Roman finds*

While the revealed image of Silchester rapidly became the model for defining the plans and make-up of the Roman town in Britain (e.g. Haverfield 1912, 30–38), the Victorian-period excavations had two major shortcomings: despite some pioneering work by Joyce in this regard, the excavators were unable to recognise either stratigraphy, such that evidence for the date of individual buildings might have been recovered, or the remains left by timber buildings. Furthermore, as Francis Haverfield recognised, ‘Such a town can have no history, and Silchester has none. Its remains do not even lie in successive strata, like the remains of many, long-lived towns’ (1900, 275); even though the excavators were aware from coins that *Calleva* had a history before the Roman invasion of Britain in AD 43, it was readily admitted that the project had provided no insight into the early history of the town.

Even while the excavations at Silchester were continuing, in 1899

the Society of Antiquaries sponsored another project to excavate Caerwent (*Venta Silurum*), the equivalent, but smaller cantonal capital of the Silures in south-east Wales. A great deal was also achieved here, but the modern village overlying the Roman town prevented as extensive an excavation as at Silchester. Nevertheless Caerwent is the only other town in Roman Britain to have been explored on a scale comparable to that of the Silchester project (as summarised in Wacher 1995, 378–91). A third project, targeted on Roman Wroxeter, was abandoned on the outbreak of World War I (WWI) with comparatively little accomplished in terms of the overall area excavated (*ibid.*, 362–77). Between the two World Wars significant work was undertaken at Verulamium by Kenyon (1934) and the Wheelers (1936). These excavations proceeded stratigraphically with account taken of datable finds in context. As a result, as well as adding to the complement of buildings recorded from Romano-British towns, notably the first theatre of Roman Britain, and town houses, it was possible also to identify different phases in the urban development and so write a history of the town: *Verulamium, a Belgic and Three Roman Cities* (Wheeler and Wheeler 1936). In the late 1930s Silchester was revisited for the first time when Mrs Cotton undertook excavations on the town defences with a view to establishing their chronology. She not only obtained dating evidence for the defences, including the outlying earthworks, but also established a date for the earliest occupation of the town she encountered in the Claudian period (Cotton 1947). However, the excavations did not add substantively to the understanding of the pre-Roman, Belgic occupation.

Thus, by the start of WWII, the exploration of the abandoned or ‘greenfield’ towns of Roman Britain had contributed very significantly to our knowledge of their layout, and the character, diversity and density of the public and private buildings which might be expected in a Romano-British town. Latterly some progress, in the context of excavation in advance of development, most notably at Verulamium, had been made towards understanding change over time. Investigation of extramural areas, including cemeteries, remained very limited. Equally, research into the latest occupation of these urban foci, in the expectation that it might illuminate the reasons for abandonment, had not begun.

In the post-World War II period the thrust of Romano-British urban archaeology was focused on recovering evidence from bomb-damaged towns prior to re-development. Inevitably this work was piecemeal, its scope determined by the pattern of damage and the phasing of development. The greenfield sites like Silchester were largely ignored, though the evidence that they had provided of the complete plans of urban buildings proved invaluable in the interpretation of the

fragments of Roman structures obtained through rescue archaeology (cf. Wachter 1995). However, important evidence of a major, late Iron Age/earliest Roman defensive circuit underlying Roman buildings and predating the Roman street grid which had been derived from aerial photography was tested by small-scale excavation in the 1950s to show that a wider story remained to be told (Boon 1969). And yet there was little confidence that further work at Silchester could enhance the Society of Antiquaries' accounts: hence the re-investigation of the possible church at Silchester in 1961 added very little to what was learned in 1892 (Frere 1976) and this reinforced the general view prevailing in the 1970s, as for example conveyed in conversation with the author by George Boon, that further excavation within the walls would not provide substantive new information. The choice of the church for reexamination by open area excavation was, perhaps, unfortunate, as subsequent investigation of the Silchester forum-basilica in the 1980s and of Insula IX, in the north-west quadrant of the town, from 1997 has amply demonstrated an extraordinary survival of stratigraphy and the possibility of recovering a fuller, and more complex sequence of Roman urban history (see Fulford and Timby 2000; Fulford et al. 2006; Fulford and Clarke 2011). Importantly, it can be seen from this modern work that the Society of Antiquaries' excavations have barely touched the stratigraphy which survived before that project commenced in 1890. Although much of the surviving archaeology is in the areas between and beneath the masonry buildings explored by the early excavators, recent excavation has shown that there is still much to be learned from within the excavated buildings themselves – including major public units such as the forum-basilica (Fulford and Timby 2000). Moreover, modern archaeology enables a richer image of activity at all phases of the town's occupation to be drawn, providing scope to question more the key aspects of origins, social and economic content and vicissitudes, living and working, and also – core to this chapter – the nature of the latest occupation and subsequent abandonment of the Roman town.

Tracing the 'End' of Roman Silchester

The question for Silchester, as for any of the other 'greenfield', larger towns of Roman Britain, is whether its archaeology into the fifth century when Rome lost control of the island is any different from that of the towns which did re-emerge in the later Anglo-Saxon period. In other words, is there any evidence that Silchester was failing, or embarking on a different strategy before the beginning of the fifth century? An important context for what follows is provided by one

conclusion of the investigation into the late occupation of Insula IX, the only area of the town to be investigated by modern archaeological methods (Fulford et al. 2006) (see [Figure 12.3](#)).



Figure 12.3

Although comprising only a very small sample of the walled area, the excavation has shown that the area was as built up at the beginning of the fifth century as it was a hundred years earlier, and, probably, a hundred years before that; the total population was probably not significantly different in number. However, in trying to address the question of what happened after AD 410 one is immediately confronted with the problem that the key source for dating stratigraphic sequences and associated assemblages of material culture, namely coinage, ceases to be imported into Britain after the first decade of the fifth century. Although the clipping of the silver *siliquae* is an insular phenomenon and appears to date both alongside and after regular silver ceased to be brought into the island in AD 402–8, thereby signifying some level of economic continuity beyond, there is no agreement on the dating and duration of this practice (cf. Guest 2005, 110–15). In any case the occurrence of *siliquae* outside hoard contexts is rare. On the question of coin profiles and the incidence of the latest coinage, Silchester does not stand out from other towns enduring into the fifth century. The latest, Theodosian bronze coinage is present in some quantity, and in a proportion to earlier fourth-century bronze coinage which is comparable with profiles derived from other towns in southern Roman Britain (cf. Besly 2006). This is true of both the overall collection of over 12,000 coins from the antiquarian excavations (Wythe 2011) and of the two

substantial excavation assemblages which have been recovered since 1909: that from the third excavation on the site of the forum-basilica in the 1980s (Boon 2000), and that from the continuing Insula IX project (Besly 2006). In addition, a small hoard, including 51 silver *siliquae*, four gold and one silver ring, was discovered by metal detecting in the 1980s (see [Figure 12.2](#)). This contained examples of both the latest regular silver brought into Britain as well as clipped *siliquae* (Fulford et al. 1987; 1989). Burnett (in Fulford et al. 1989, 226) has suggested a date around 410 for the concealment of the hoard.

The results from both forum-basilica and Insula IX excavations reveal activity which continues after the accumulation of deposits which contain the latest regular bronze coinage of the House of Theodosius (the forum-basilica also yielded a stratified, unclipped *siliqua* of Theodosius – Boon 2000, 161–2). The question then remains, as it does for other towns in Roman Britain, as to how long that occupation continued. In the case of the two large-scale modern excavations the situation is hampered on the one hand by the damage caused by centuries of cultivation and, at the forum-basilica, by the loss of stratigraphy resulting from two previous excavations of the building. The question of continuity can only be addressed if either artefacts which have been independently dated to after the early fifth century are recovered or if other dating methodologies, such as dendrochronology or radiocarbon dating, assist. In the case of Silchester, George Boon (1959) reviewed all the material finds which might belong to the latest occupation and identified some pieces which reasonably could lie within the period of the fifth to seventh centuries AD. But with the exception of the ogham stone (see below), none of these finds have provenances within the town. Conspicuous among them, as also among others excavated since, is the negative, in other words the absence of securely provenanced examples of Anglo-Saxon material, which might be expected from the mid-/late sixth and seventh century, had occupation persisted until then. Modern excavation has contributed a category of material not recognised by the antiquarian excavators: red-streaked window glass which is more familiarly associated with the late seventh- to ninth-century Anglo-Saxon monasteries of north-east England (Cramp 2006, 56–80). This has been recovered from the latest surviving, stratified contexts from the forum-basilica and a further example has been found close to the south-east, postern-gate of the town (Allen with Price 2000, 314, 319; Price 1984, 116). Noticeably, pieces of such glass have also been identified in the late Roman phases of sites such as the town of Wroxeter, the temple at Uley, Gloucestershire and the villa at Box, Wiltshire (Allen with Price 2000, 314; Price 1993, 189). We will

return to a possible interpretation of this material below.

Scientific dating techniques have only been applied in this context in one case study, in the dating of a human skull discovered in the silts of the late Roman defensive ditch outside the North Gate (see [Figure 12.2](#)). Set at a period when the radiocarbon calibration curve shows little marked change and therefore the potential range of any single date is quite wide, the calibrated date of this skull is AD 420–540 at one standard deviation (Fulford 2000). That the Society of Antiquaries excavators noted another skull from the same context in their excavation of 1909 (Hope and Stephenson 1910, 323) suggests more than a single, isolated event and corresponding deposit, although we sadly remain ignorant of this (potentially significant) event.

One further example of a theoretically independently-dated action requires assessment. Arguably one the most important discoveries by the Society of Antiquaries at Silchester pertaining to the town's late history was that of a damaged, dwarf, Roman 'baluster' column with an inscription in Irish ogham (see [Figure 12.5](#)). It was found in 1893 in Insula IX upside down at the bottom of a well above a pewter flagon (Fox 1895, 441). Recent re-examination of the context showed that the well was associated with a small late Roman building positioned end on to the main N–S street of the town, whose occupation had continued certainly into the fifth century, if not beyond (Fulford et al. 2006)

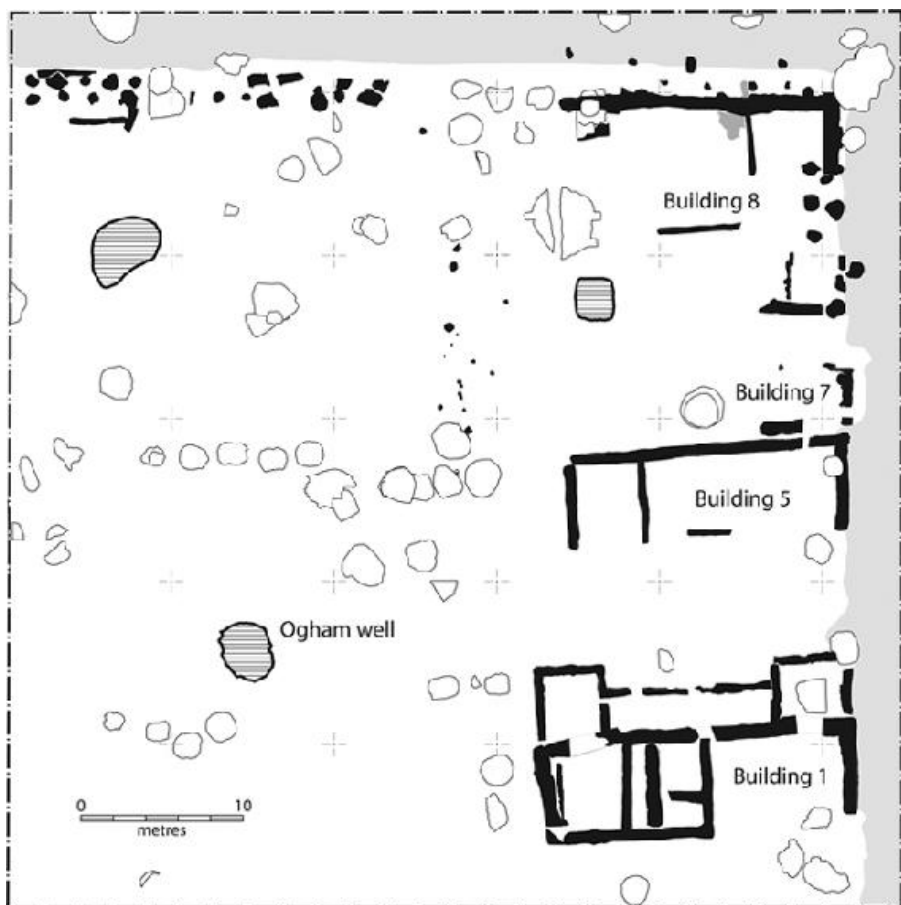


Figure 12.4 Calleva (Silchester): plan of the late Roman occupation in Insula IX with the location of the well with the dwarf column with the ogham inscription discovered in 1893 (After Fulford et al. 2006, 5)

The placing of the stone in the well would have rendered the latter useless and it is probably reasonable to assume that the well's closure coincided with the abandonment of the building too. Re-examination of the ogham revealed a reading: *TEBICATO[S] MAQI MUCOI*, which may be translated as '(The something) of Tebicatus, son of the tribe of ...' (Fulford et al. 2000, 10–11). Linguistically the language of the Silchester ogham can be tied to the earliest phases of the ogham script, but then the question arises as to the date of the earliest ogham in Ireland where ogham is seen to have developed. This question in turn depends on the date for the introduction of Latin into Ireland because the earliest ogham reflects knowledge of Latin grammar and orthography. Since it is reasonably certain that Latin became accessible in Ireland in the fifth century, so the Silchester ogham could well date to the late fourth or fifth century, thus making it one of the

earliest ogham stones anywhere (ibid., 12–15). However, the sequence associated with the adjacent building indicates that its occupation continued well after the introduction of the latest bronze coinage into Britain. But, as with every stratigraphic sequence which extends after AD 400, the difficulty is of applying dates to stages in that sequence. So, we have to imagine a scenario where the stone is in use and inscribed for an unknown period before it was taken down and placed in the well. Such a chronology could extend well into the fifth century, if not the sixth. It is not at all clear what was represented by the missing word at the start of the inscription – was it ‘memorial’ or ‘stone’, or even ‘property’ or ‘land’? The point is important since burial in cemeteries outside the town walls was the norm during the Roman period and if the stone marked the burial place of Tebicatus, it would imply burial after the breakdown of Roman traditions. However, within the excavation trench (which represents about one third of Insula IX), there was no trace of an adult, human burial. The possibility thus remains that the stone was instead a property marker, associated with a particular structure, perhaps even Late Roman Building 1 located in Insula IX, and extant in the fifth century.



Figure 12.5 Calleva (Silchester): the ogham inscription (Photo: Brian Williams, copyright Museum of Reading)

While the inscription itself is of enormous interest, so, too, is the context of its deposition, upside down towards the bottom of a well. This find can be paralleled by examples of epigraphic and monumental material which have been recovered from wells of sound Roman date in Britain. As a deliberate deposit it also recalls two other notable examples from the Society of Antiquaries' excavations at Silchester (see [Figure 12.2](#)). Both comprised hoards of ironwork which had been placed in deep pits, one of which was certainly a well. The first was found in Pit N, adjacent to Town House 2, in Insula I in 1890

(Fox and Hope 1891b). While the full depth of the pit is not recorded, the ironwork was found below a depth of five feet. The hoard comprised some 66 items and had been placed above a cist of chalk pieces which contained a grey ware vessel, originally with a handle; beneath the cist was a large, but broken, pottery jug. The second hoard was found in 1900 in Insula XXIII, immediately to the north of Insula I, in Well no.2, a few metres to the north of Town House 2 and adjacent to the street flanking the east side of the *insula* (Fox and Hope 1901). This well was '21 feet 7 inches deep and lined with 12 feet of square timber'. The hoard of over 100 pieces was found approximately nine feet down in the upper part of the timbered section of the well to a depth of seven feet; it rested on a 'deposit of black ash, which filled the remaining 5 feet to the bottom of the well'. While the ironwork itself is intrinsically not susceptible to close dating, the pottery found in association with both hoards was identified by Manning as being late fourth century in date (1972, 236), the two vessels associated with the 1900 hoard being of red-slipped Oxfordshire ware. Both hoards contain a wide range of artefacts, including scrap items, but it is not altogether clear how they came to be formed. The most widely canvassed suggestion is that these collections were accumulated by blacksmiths (cf. Boon 1974, 268), but Manning noted that neither contained the full complement of smith's equipment. Taking account of the circumstances of deposition, he instead argued that they were both ritual deposits (1972, 247–8). Given the range of occupations which can be associated with late Roman households in Silchester, including smithing (Fulford et al. 2006) it is also possible that these ironwork assemblages with their diverse range of items, including blacksmith's, farrier's, carpenter's, shoemaker's and agricultural tools, simply represent the range of occupations of the households with which they were associated. While, specifically, both hoards can be compared with one from the small town of Great Chesterford, Essex, also dated to the late Roman period (Manning 1972, 235–6), in general terms these hoards can be compared with others from Britain from the fourth and fifth centuries, including the great hoards of precious metal objects, such as Hoxne, Mildenhall, Thetford, Water Newton, etc., or those of pewter, such as Appleford, Appleshaw and Lakenheath, or the more abundant hoards of both precious and base metal coin (Hobbs 2006; Manning 1972; Robertson 2000). Locally, in terms of deliberate deposition, they can be compared with the extramural *siliqua* hoard and the burial of the ogham stone, which can also be regarded as having ritual connotations. In Insula IX it has been suggested that the remaining two late Roman wells found within the excavation area were also deliberately filled in the fifth century (Fulford et al. 2006,

274). While the Victorian excavators did not regard the pit in which the 1890 hoard was found as a well, its projected depth of about 5 + 5 feet would take it into the depth range of the Insula IX late Roman wells. Thus, of the four deliberate late fourth-century and later deposits in intramural Silchester, discussed above, three certainly rendered the associated wells useless.

Interpreting ‘Post-Roman’ Silchester

The evidence from Insula IX, therefore, combined with that from Insulae I and XXIII, has led to the suggestion of deliberate abandonment, though whether forced or voluntary, cannot be determined. One implication of the deliberate infilling of the wells is that a return to *Calleva* by the departing inhabitants was not envisaged. In contrast to the evidence of abandonment from Insula IX is that from the forum-basilica. Not only is there the red-streaked window glass with its possible early Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical associations, but there is also the pattern of demolition and robbing of the foundations of the building. Across *Calleva* the consistent picture to emerge from both antiquarian and modern excavation is of wall footings whose uppermost surviving surface corresponds with the level of the ground surface in antiquity. This is also the case with the forum-basilica except for the west range of the basilica itself (but excluding the outer, ambulatory wall) and the colonnade around the forum, which was robbed down to the level of the foundation offset, about a metre below the level of the ancient ground surface (see [Figure 12.6](#)). This seems to point to two episodes of robbing, neither of which can be firmly dated, except that the later presumably occurred at a time when other foundations across the town were no longer visible. Arguably the deeper robbing is explained by the need to maximise the recovery of stone.

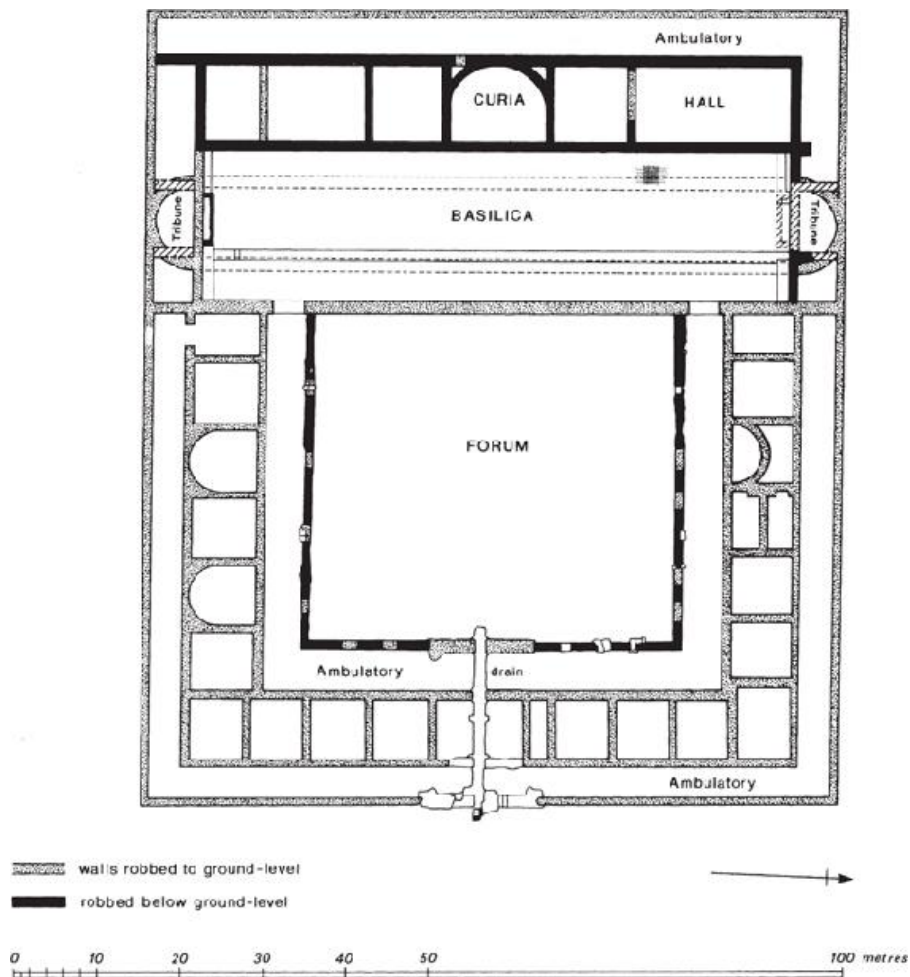


Figure 12.6 Calleva (Silchester): plan of the early second-century AD forum-basilica indicating the two phases of robbing (After Fox and Hope 1893)

To explain why one major element of this great building was robbed more extensively than the other seems to imply that it stood as a substantial feature for longer. Given the find spots of the red-streaked window glass from within the main body of the hall, is it reasonable to speculate that the basilica was retained, in part at least, to serve as a church or monastic foundation in the post-Roman period? Early medieval Christian foundations within late Roman walled circuits can be paralleled elsewhere in southern Britain at, for example, the Saxon Shore forts of Reculver in Kent and Bradwell in Essex (Rigold 1977; Bell 1998).

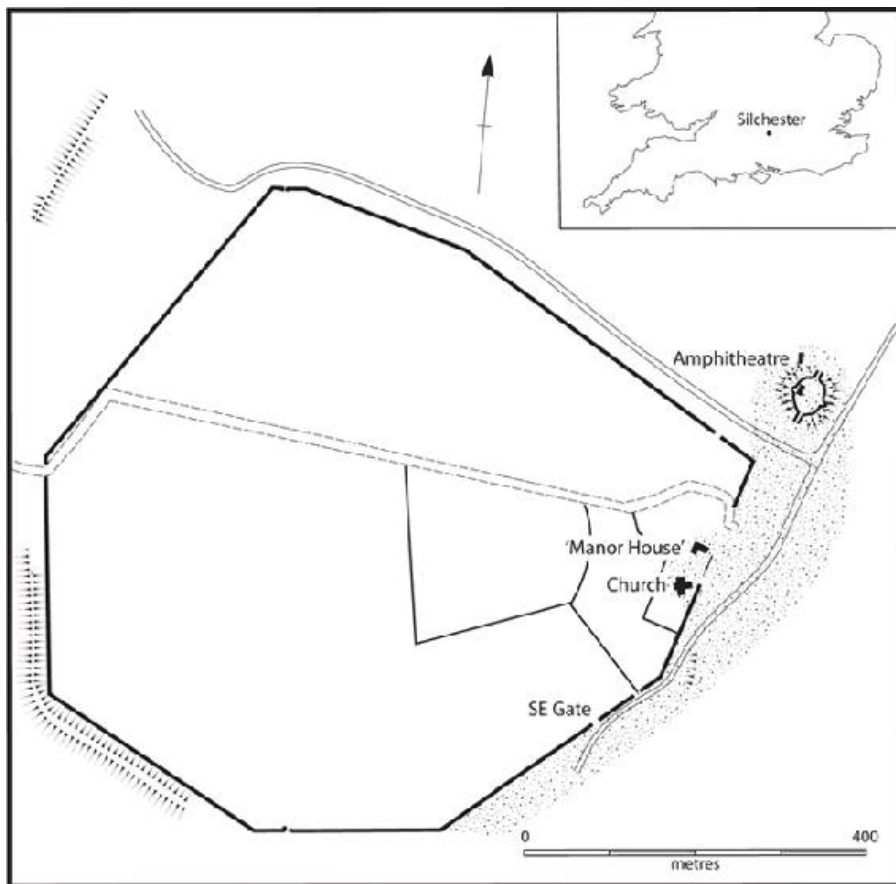


Figure 12.7 *Silchester: the extent of the medieval village (stippled), twelfth to fourteenth centuries*

Such a hypothesis begs the question of the fate of Silchester's Roman church located to the south of the forum-basilica (Frere 1976). There is no evidence for occupation beyond the latest Roman phase and doubt has of course been cast over the Christian attribution (King 1983). Indeed, no red-streaked glass is recorded from this structure, and the later, medieval church is located elsewhere, just inside the Roman town walls, not far from the East Gate and the probable location of an extramural cemetery. This building is dated no earlier than the later eleventh century and there is no evidence that it was built on the site of an earlier church, although it is close to the location of two Romano-Celtic temples of uncertain, but probable early Roman date (Boon 1989). This later church is close to the heart of the (admittedly limited) traces of medieval settlement associated with the Roman town extending from the amphitheatre around the walls towards the south-east gate (Fulford 1984, 231–2; 1989, 59–65) (see Figure 12.7).

We are left with the possibility of two Roman and/or early medieval ecclesiastical foundations: the so-called early church which certainly originates within the Roman period, but does not seem to have a longer history than that of any other late Roman building within the walls; and the tantalising evidence from the forum-basilica. Whatever the nature of the occupation within the basilica, it survived the period when the masonry buildings within the town were reduced to ground level. Closer dating is not possible, but if there was an ecclesiastical building on the forum-basilica site, it was certainly gone by the later eleventh century, when the medieval church was built. When it originated is far from clear, but might this be linked with the general abandonment of the town? Circumstantial evidence to support such an idea comes from reflecting on the remarkable survival of the town walls. While no above-ground masonry remains within the walled area, the walled circuit itself does survive in its entirety and even today substantial stretches survive to a height of more than 4 m. Weathering over the centuries has certainly reduced it, but there is no evidence of systematic robbing, though the medieval church, located right beside the town wall, almost certainly uses flint obtained from the latter. Why were the flint and other stone from the town wall, the first structure encountered by anyone wishing to rob stone from the site, left essentially untouched? Was it regarded as the precinct or *vallum monasterii*, the latter centrally located within the former town among the (serviceable) remains of the forum-basilica? Might we even argue that 'urban' abandonment coincided with a decision to establish a monastic foundation at Silchester?

However we may choose to interpret the very limited evidence from the forum-basilica we are still left with the question as to how long occupation continued within the town before the abandonment of occupation which we find in Insula IX. The general tendency in Romano-British archaeology is to assume that town life had ended by about the mid-fifth century (e.g. Esmonde Cleary 1989; Wachter 1995, 408–21). The break with central authority, so clearly symbolised by the cessation in the importation of silver and copper alloy coinage, is seen as pivotal. No new coinage implies a severe decline, if not an end to market activity. The relative lack of burials following on from the well-dated fourth-century inhumations in those few cemeteries (e.g. at Dorchester, Dorset, and Winchester, Hants.), which have been extensively explored, points to a decline in urban population (Clarke 1979; Farwell and Molleson 1993). Although a handful of insights derived from written sources have been taken as evidence of some continuing civic role into the second quarter of the fifth century, there is considerable scepticism as to how far town life – as opposed to life in towns – continued after the first decade of the fifth century.

Nevertheless the evidence of continuity from the artisanal quarter of Insula IX at Silchester is complemented by that of the wealthier urban elite as represented by the occupants of the town house in Insula XXVII, Verulamium, which continued well into the fifth century, eventually to be replaced by a further, substantial building – a masonry barn – at an unknown date in the later fifth or sixth century (Frere 1983, 23–5, 212–27). Classically, lack of dating evidence prevents the attachment of any precise chronology to the Verulamium sequence, but the example does provide a substantive archaeological context for the visit of St Germanus in AD 429 and his meeting with the town's 'tribunes'. Thus, notwithstanding changing economic and political circumstances, both Silchester and Verulamium show evidence of continuity across the social spectrum of their respective populations. The Silchester evidence from Insula IX, however, gives a clue as to the economic basis which made that continuity viable (see below).

In the case of *Calleva* we can now be clear that the latest Roman evidence compares very well with that from other southern towns and that there is no reason to suppose that this town was any more or less prosperous than any other in south or south-eastern Britain at the beginning of the fifth century. Where *Calleva* departs from the general pattern is in its failure to re-emerge as a town in the late Saxon period. As discussed, some signs exist to indicate a deliberate abandonment on the part of the population, at least of Insula IX, between the mid-fifth and the mid-seventh century. What excavation of Insula IX has also produced is evidence of the (residual) population having the means to continue in the town on a subsistence, or barter-economy basis. For example, the latest deposits provide evidence for animal husbandry within and around the town, the capacity to produce (= smelt) iron in small quantities and to process animal bone for its fats (summarised in Fulford et al. 2006, 267–70). The very latest pit deposits within Insula IX contain assemblages of material culture which suggest continuing life without recourse to the mass, material culture of the past, notably pottery (ibid., 275–6). Furthermore, it appeared that all the latest wells here functioned up to the point when they were deliberately infilled, suggesting that the associated properties remained active until then. Indeed, if one took away the archaeologically distinctive material culture of the fourth century here, i.e. the pottery and the bronze coinage, one would be left with a situation very little different to that pertaining after the early fifth century.

This situation may be compared with that observed at Wroxeter, another 'greenfield' Roman town which has undergone a long-term, large-scale, research excavation in the late twentieth century. Careful

excavation of the basilica of the baths towards the centre of the town revealed a remarkable sequence of occupation extending beyond continued use of the baths into the fifth century, the demolition of the majority of the building around the mid-sixth century, to the insertion of a human burial in the seventh or eighth century (Barker et al. 1997; White and Barker 1998, 118–36). However one might regard the evidence for the date of the demolition of the baths basilica, and for the character and interpretation of the succeeding, possible sub-Roman timber structures (the so-called ‘great rebuilding’) installed within the complex’s ruins (cf. Fulford 2002), there is persuasive evidence of continuing use of the structure as well as of a wider occupation of the town into the sixth century. To this period, or the later fifth/sixth century, is also assigned the tombstone of Cunorix with its Irish language epitaph: CUNORIX MACUS MAQUI COLINE (RIB 3145 = Tomlin et al. 2009, 148). Though written in Roman capital script, not ogham, this is a remarkable parallel for the Silchester ogham stone.

A case has also been made for the reuse of a central, public building of Wroxeter for ecclesiastical purposes. To account for a group of human burials found in the adjacent hypocaust, it is suggested that the *frigidarium* of the baths was used as a church from the later fifth century (White and Barker 1998, 124–6). However, as with the suggested interpretation of the forum-basilica at Silchester, the evidence is not yet sufficiently robust to stress this parallel between the two towns. Further, unlike Silchester, where no standing Roman masonry remains within the town walls, the only masonry at Wroxeter to survive above ground is a substantial fragment of the fabric of the baths basilica (‘The Old Work’), including part of the *frigidarium*. Conversely, at Wroxeter, there is no evidence for late Roman town walls of masonry, merely of a rampart associated with a broad ditch (ibid., 103–4). Eventually, and probably in the seventh century, the settlement at Wroxeter shrank and the reduced focus moved to the south towards the location of the present village around the church of St Andrew. The latter may have originated as a monastery, though its fabric dates back to the eighth or ninth century (ibid., 137–42).

Just as the abandonment of Wroxeter as a centre of political power is explained against the backdrop and growth of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia (ibid., 134–6), so similar arguments can be presented for the abandonment of *Calleva* (Fulford et al. 2006, 280–82). By the mid-seventh century Winchester was emerging as the centre of political power of the kingdom of Wessex, while, to the north, Birinus had been appointed in AD 635 as bishop at Dorchester-on-Thames, the ‘small’ town some 20 miles (32 km) to the north of *Calleva*. Midway between these two, and also lying in the frontier zone

between Wessex and Mercia from the later seventh century, was Silchester, conceivably an integral part of an organised frontier system (Reynolds and Langlands 2006). Perhaps one way of neutralising a potential threat to either kingdom was to evict the population of *Calleva* and found a monastery, in this case in the ruins of the forum-basilica. The abandonment of Wroxeter also provides a counter to the economic argument for the demise of Silchester: the former was not only located, like Silchester, on one of the principal roads of Roman Britain, Watling Street, but it also lay beside a major, navigable river, the Severn. Whatever economic advantage the latter might have given Wroxeter, it was not sufficient to deter its abandonment, though its eventual ‘successor’ of Shrewsbury, which was probably established in the later ninth century to exploit a more defensible location, is also on the Severn (White and Barker 1998, 144–5; discussed fully in Baker 2010, 81–8).

Conclusion

To conclude, recent excavation of the latest occupation of *Calleva* has contributed to two important aspects of the debate as to what happened in Romano-British towns after the beginning of the fifth century. First, it has shown that the reasons for the ‘extinction’ of the town lie in the Early Middle Ages at the time of the emergence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia and not earlier, and, second, that the community of *Calleva* had the capacity to continue to inhabit the town by virtue of both farming the locality and of continuing to retain essential, specialised skills, such as iron-making, which could be bartered for other goods and commodities. Such a scenario may allow us to re-examine other towns in Britain where re-emergence did take place from the later Saxon period onwards, and to develop the hypothesis that that occupation built on a continuing population within the town, subsisting with a distinctive set of occupational attributes. While the early excavators of Silchester did not have the skills or knowledge to address systematically questions about the latest Roman and sub-Roman occupation and the end of the occupation of the town, modern work has shown that a very great deal can be learned. Moreover, given the extent of survival of ‘late’ stratigraphy from the early excavations, there is no reason why further excavation in any part of the walled area, or the suburbs beyond, including the so far unexplored cemeteries, should not shed important new light on these questions.

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Chapter 13

Concluding Remarks.

A Tale of Many (Lost) Cities: Past, Present and Future

Andrea Augenti

I know of at least 10 major books on the subject of lost cities, many of these works forming part of the very history of archaeology. Each concerns quite different cities: cities that emerged and eventually died far away from each other; cities that were generated, used and expressed by quite diverse cultures and societies. Those works that specifically come first to my mind are Heinrich Schliemann's monograph on Troy (1875), the work of Stephens and Catherwood on the lost cities of the Maya (1843), and Hiram Bingham's books on Machu Picchu and on the Incas (1930, 1948). Much more recent books to cite include that on the lost cities of Magna Grecia in southern Italy by Pier Giovanni Guzzo (1982) and the glossy but intelligent coffee-table work *Atlas of the Lost Cities: Legendary Cities Rediscovered* by Brenda Rosen (2008). And no doubt many other worthy books are out there to be discovered on individual sites.

These books exist because lost or abandoned cities have always been magnets of interest and research and are one of the main, recurring subject foci of archaeological exploration and debate. Furthermore, urban loss – and, with it, the demise of cultures and civilisations – is one of the subjects set at the very roots of the concept and practice of archaeology. Suffice to observe the vast and ongoing enthusiasm aroused by places like Pompeii, Ebla, Tell-el Amarna, Petra and Samarra among both scholars and tourists. The reasons are not difficult to understand: first of all, abandoned cities carry with them a notable aura of mystery, since they are identified with the civilisations that created them (meaning that such cities can be perceived as mirrors of lost powers). Secondly, cities, arenas of population and display, can be compared to living organisms: these cities, like human beings, live, evolve but also die. Finally – and perhaps most importantly – the spaces, ruins and residues of fallen cities form, in theory, optimal 'laboratories' of exploration, containing potentially accessible concentrations of data about both site and its past: if one wishes to write a 'thick description' (a term taken from Geertz 1973) of a lost civilisation, then their extinct cities are central to any study.

However, on this last statement there in fact lies the heavy burden of an old and established scholarly attitude, one which can frequently condition the very nature of the archaeological data. For a long time scholars have considered lost cities by selecting specific segments of their past to investigate – in general, the best known and more representative of the golden age of these ancient centres. Thus, even 30 years ago, was anyone really bothered with Sparta after its perceived heyday, and with its Roman or post-antique sequences? This approach clashes with a fundamental aspect inherent in the very concept of the ‘lost’ city. The Pompeii paradigm is quite circumscribed and rarely applicable; indeed, it is almost unique: namely the sudden, violent and conclusive death of a city. In reality, lost cities are far less often mirrors to just one civilisation, but more frequently reflect on many, one superimposed on another. Effectively, the vast majority of cities are ‘pluristratified’, signifying places in which people persisted and re-settled, places which retain a role in a regional landscape, meaning that a city’s space may be occupied continuously, if in differing ways or with differing emphases, or in phases of discontinuous use; some of this activity may persist long after an ‘official’ recognition of the death of that site as a city.

Archaeologists of the twenty-first century are of course working in an age in which the two related disciplines of medieval and post-medieval archaeology have not only become active but are now firmly and widely affirmed. No longer should it be the case that scholars select and focus on urban time slices of personal interest, even if those slices are the initial ones, those of urban emergence. For who can be allowed to claim that the moment of foundation is more interesting than that of decay or abandonment? Our past is long and rich in data and interest at each stage of its articulation. We want to know and explore how our urban tales begin, progress, change, end and are perceived; seeking and displaying the ‘golden days’ is a past part of our archaeological history.

It is because of these reasons that the chapters included in this volume are important ones. This is the first time that a group of scholars have focused on the subject of extinct cities by adopting a narrative that explicitly avoids the previous chronological biases and instead concentrates on their longer evolution and their post-classical ‘afterlives’, taking also a wider geographical perspective that extends in the west from Spain and Italy to England, across to the Balkan peninsula, and eastwards to Asia Minor and North Africa. The coverage enables us to examine and visualise the lives and ends of both single sites as well as groups of cities across the end of the ancient world and into the Middle Ages. From these papers we can chart in detail different urban trajectories and varied transformations

to the urban landscapes, notably the modes in which citizens of those periods reused ancient remains and ruins and located their own spaces. In sum, we can follow here the emergence of new concepts of urban form and content: within older wall circuits, uneven or irregular spaces in which new residences, working units and central places (these often sizeable) nestle or are 'accommodated' among ruined and empty spaces. This, to me, is the most characteristic aspect of the late antique and early medieval town; it is the result of a process that happens at a different rhythm, timing and intensity according to multiple factors; but it is a process that needs to be investigated much more fully in order to understand it properly and in particular to understand the players involved.

From the examples and evidence set out in this book it is possible to delineate some basic models of urban transformation and loss: cities that became fortresses (e.g. Cosa); centres whose structures slowly fell away until they ceased to have an urban character (like Classe); sites whose roles were usurped or replaced by others. Importantly, some of the papers presented here remind us that it was not just ancient cities that died: the same fate befell new nuclei founded between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages – such is the well-known and still much debated case of *Recopolis*. But we can cite many others, such as *Leopolis*, the city founded in Latium by Pope Leo IV in the ninth century and later transformed into a castle. Indeed, an angle not pursued in this volume is the creation of new urban entities in the late antique and early medieval centuries and a consideration of their forms and roles and how far these borrowed from the older urban past. In Italy we know of very few such new cities that were created and which survived and thrived – the most important being Venice and Ferrara. But what is the exact number of new urban foci established in this crucial time period throughout the peninsula which then vanished? We have a much better knowledge of medieval foundations – mostly in Northern and Central Europe – but relevant available data on this specific subject remain limited. This too is an issue on which thorough archaeological work is badly needed.

Another aspect brought out in many of the chapters in this volume relates to memory. Even when cities are lost, and sometimes even while they are dying, they leave behind themselves a long trail of memory. Cities are nodal places in the landscape, reshaping it and giving it new, different meanings and contents. Immediately after their foundation they become landmarks with geographical, administrative, economic, religious and symbolic values; they become reference points, full of meanings; even as they fade as built and lived-in entities certain vestiges of their role and past endure. In this light we can understand better how some sites can still be chosen as 'stages'

for official acts even after their loss. This happens at Luni: the ceremony of investiture of the bishop of the surrounding area persists in the cathedral of this lost city even after the bishopric has transferred to the nearby town of Sarzana (Schmiedt 1978). Comparable is the case of Classe: this city is perceived as already extinct in the ninth century by the writer Andreas Agnellus, and yet is chosen by the emperor Otto as his stopping- and rest-point during a trip to Ravenna; and one of its most important monumental complexes, the former Byzantine church of San Severo, was in AD 967 the venue for an official decree regarding a dispute between the pope and the archbishop of Ravenna (see Augenti, this volume).

This last example is also significant in the fact that the decree of 967 is made not in the church of San Severo itself, but in the adjoining ninth-/tenth-century Benedictine monastery. One should observe that not infrequently among the ruins of lost cities we see the foundation of monasteries (as in the example of *Falerii Novi* cited in [Chapter 1](#)). These monasteries to a degree can be said to have kept alive places that were no longer urban; these monasteries and their occupants lived, worked in and gathered up some of the memories of these lost pasts. Moreover, monasteries were – in different ways and on many levels – some of the *lieux de memoire* par excellence during the Middle Ages (Geary 1994; La Rocca 1996 on the relationship between the monastery of S. Dalmazzo and a lost city); and many scholars duly consider them as distinctive, quasi-urban units in the early medieval period in particular, as magnets of trade and culture, producers as well as consumers, foci of display and contact.

In 1974 General Giulio Schmiedt published an article on the subject of the lost and new cities in Italy after the end of Antiquity. This remains a fundamental reference article, to go alongside the compact discussion paper by Bryan Ward-Perkins in 1988 on urbanism in northern Italy between AD 400 and 900. But rather surprisingly, wide-scale syntheses have not been produced since, or at least not in Italy; while research has persisted and expanded we still lack an overall image and frame for the whole peninsula (indeed, the centre and south were never approached in detail or in a systematic way). We urgently need much more detail in this field of research to build on and enhance the crude data so far available. We certainly need detailed survey work, and some of the papers in this volume demonstrate that geophysics and urban landscape archaeology are starting to yield quite valuable and fresh results in this direction – even if personally I agree with Hodges and Bowden that excavation will remain the tool that will guarantee a fuller, more rounded and more tangible historic depth to our knowledge. And most importantly, we need a census at regional and then national scale. Investigations on

urbanism give their best results when dealing on a larger scale, as shown by some of the most successful research in this field (e.g. Bairoch 1988; de Vries 1984). Nowadays computers allow us to work in this direction, offering scope to create and manage huge databases. The creation of national atlases of lost or extinct towns and cities that can be continuously updated is a concrete possibility, and some scholars and institutions are already working on this (thus, for example, the University of Bologna has recently launched such a project for Italy). I really hope that this book, an up-to-date and thought-provoking first focus on the subject, bringing together both historical and archaeological approaches, will be a notable stimulus to scholars in many other nations to take up this challenge and give fuller, necessary attention to the phenomenon of abandoned, but rarely forgotten ancient urban sites.

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Colour Plate Section



Figure 1.2 Digitally enhanced false-colour composite image of near-infrared, red, and green aerial photographs of the area of the Roman city of Altinum in north-east Italy (Realvista 2007, Telespazio S.p.A., Rome) The near-infrared radiation, which is highly sensitive to vegetation health, highlights the archaeological features. North is at the top of the image (Image from Ninfo et al. 2009; reproduced courtesy of Andrea Ninfo, University of Padua).



Figure 1.3 A – Map of the Roman city of Altinum draped on the Digital Elevation Model with interpretative reading and plots from the magnetometer survey and aerial imagery shown in Figure 1.2. The asterisks indicate points of earlier excavation work. B – Geographical setting of the archaeological site in context with Venice and the lagoon; grey: urban areas; brown: salt marshes; green: alluvial plain and coastal areas (Image from Ninfo et al. 2009, reproduced courtesy of Andrea Ninfo, University of Padua)

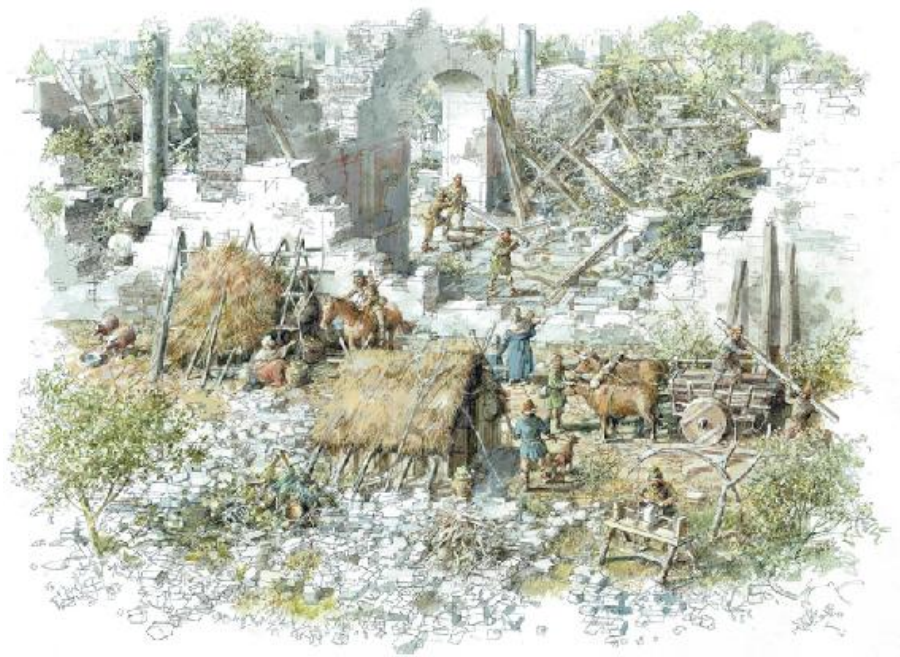


Figure 1.6 Reconstruction drawing of a scene in early to middle Anglo-Saxon Leicester, showing housing and robbing activity: the foreground shows an Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building constructed on top of the collapsed wall of the macellum (see [Figure 1.5](#)); in the background are the ruins of the rest of the macellum. (Image copyright ULAS and Mike Codd)

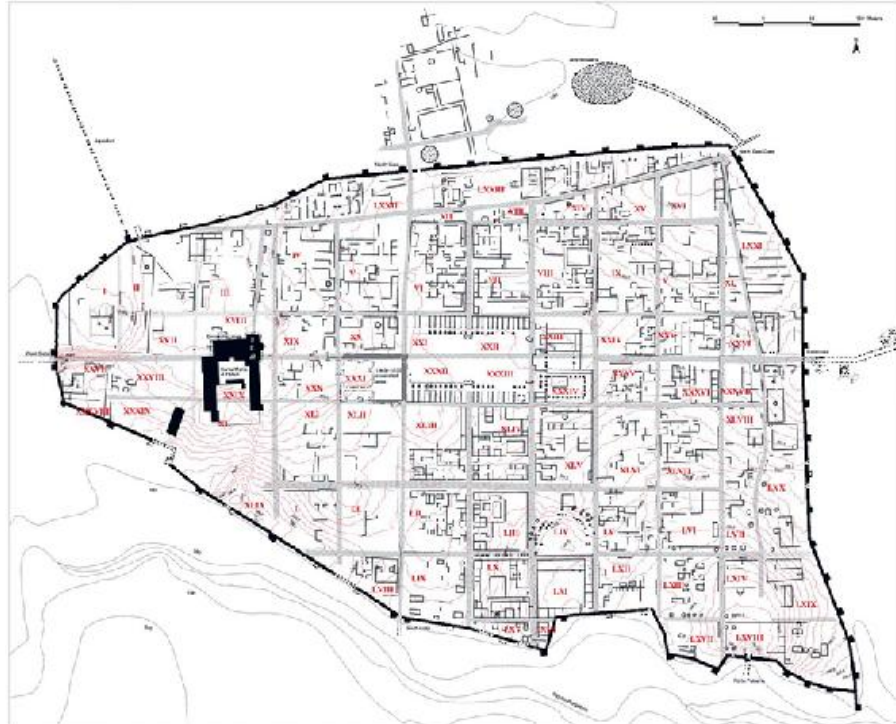


Figure 1.7 Falerii Novi – interpretative reading of the city plan based on the geophysical surveys (Image courtesy of Keay et al. 2000 and the British School at Rome)

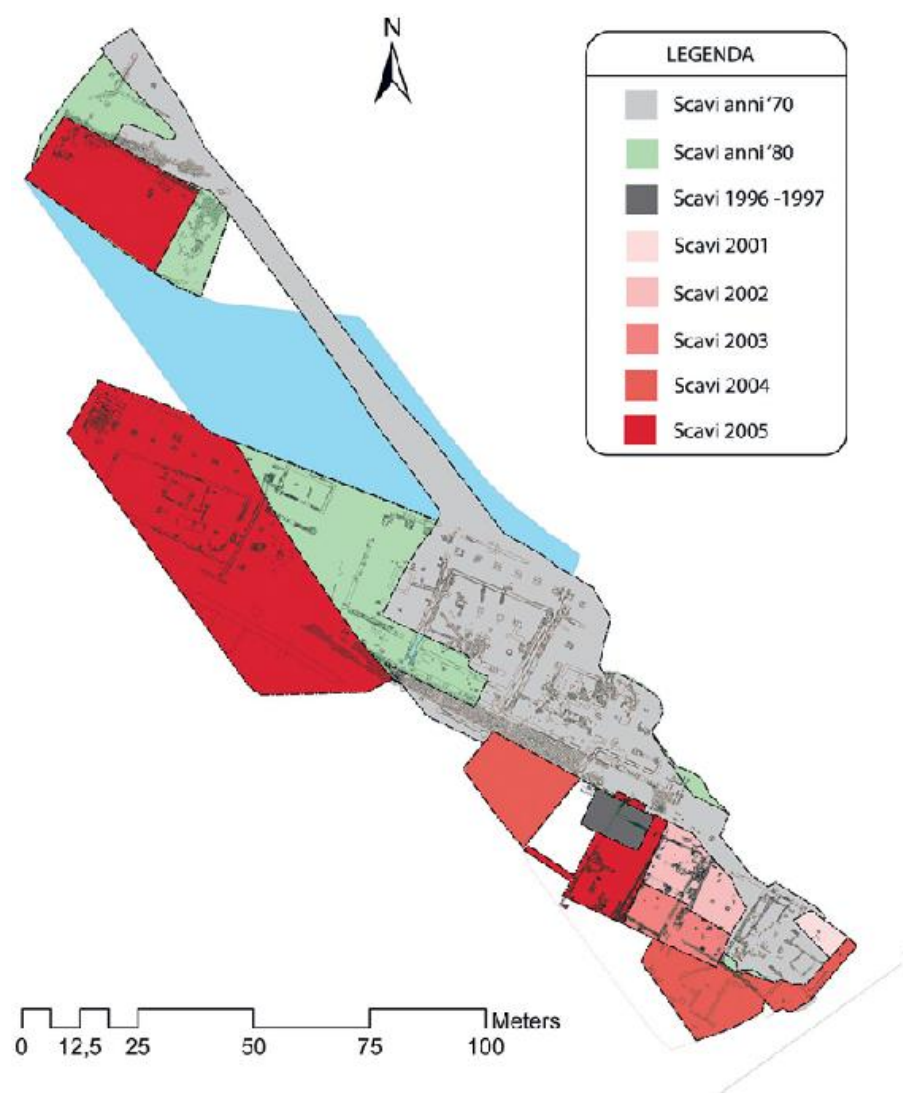


Figure 2.2 Classe, port quarter: locations of excavation zones in 2004–05

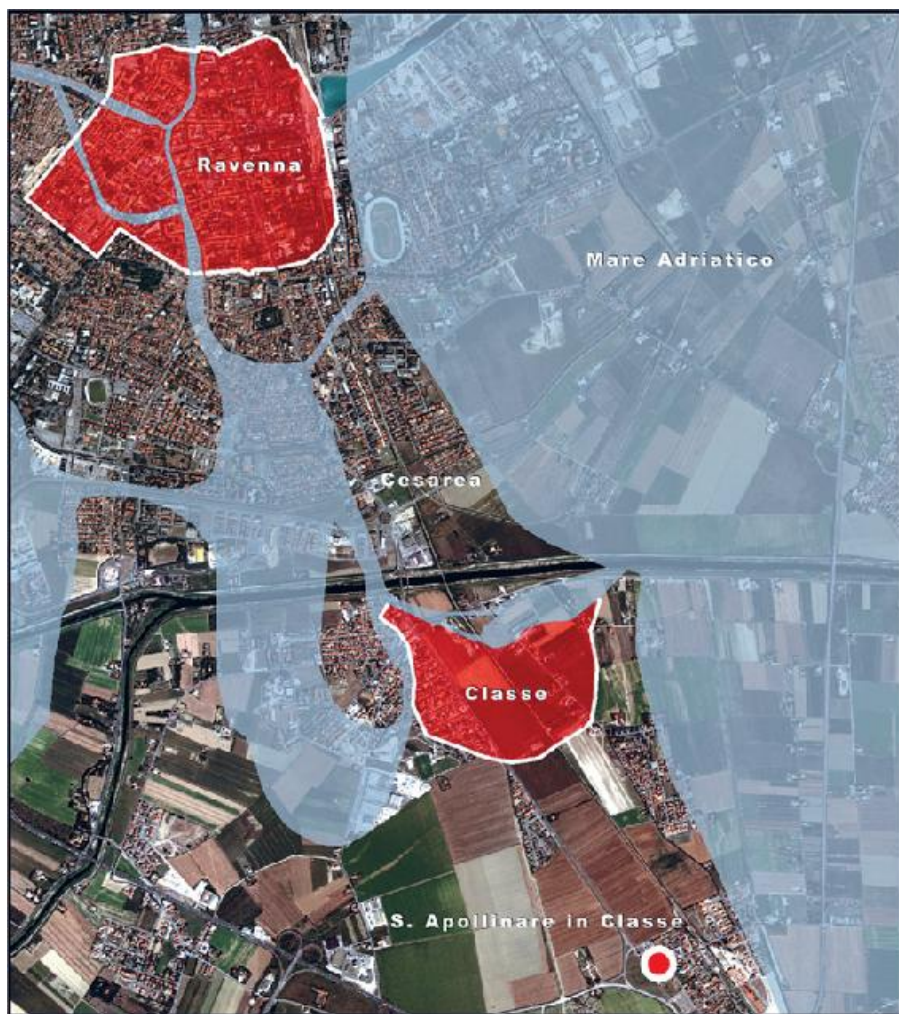


Figure 2.5 Ravenna, Caesarea and Classe: reconstructions of the ancient topography

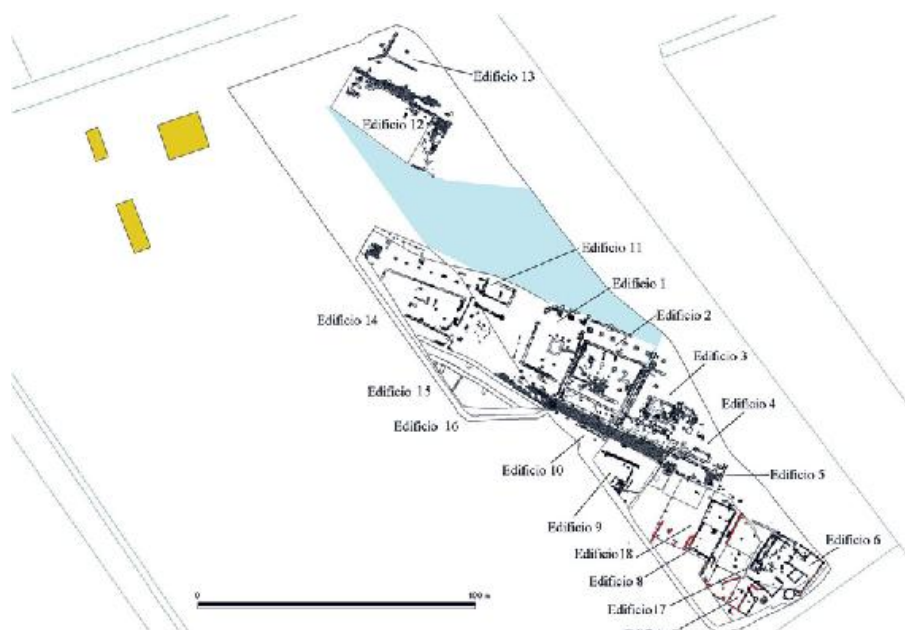


Figure 2.6 Classe: plan of the port topography based on the most recent excavations

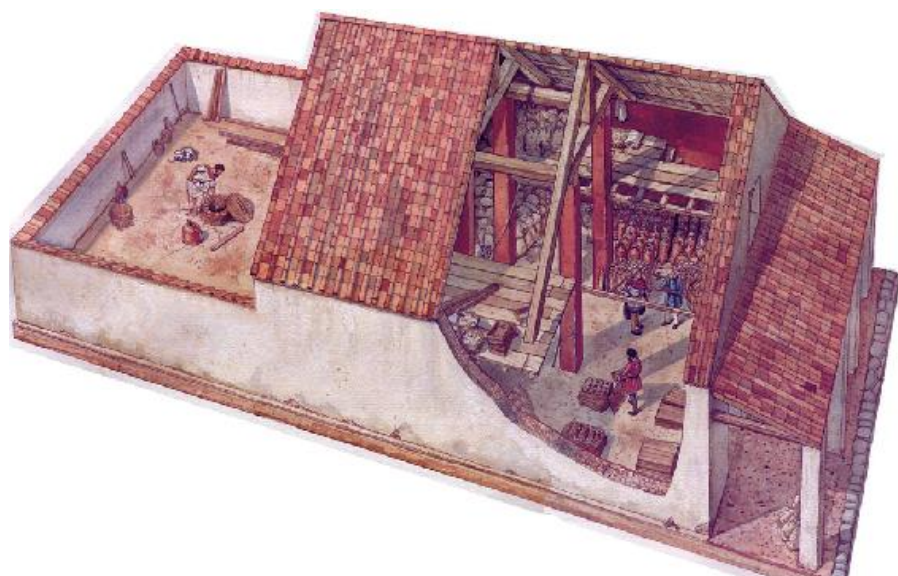


Figure 2.7 Classe, port quarter: reconstruction of Warehouse 17 (Design by Giorgio Albertini)



Figure 2.8 Classe, San Severo complex – photograph of the Mausoleum of S. Ruffillo under excavation

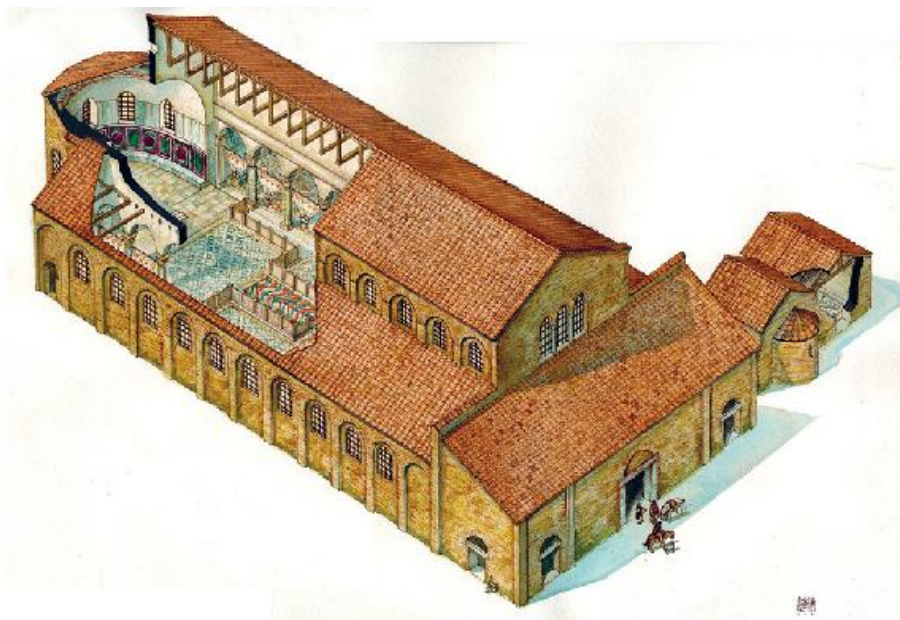


Figure 2.11 Classe, San Severo complex: reconstruction of basilica c. AD 600 (Design by Giorgio Albertini)



Figure 3.2 Oblique aerial view from the south on the central area of the site of Potentia (Vermeulen et al. 2009). Note the clear grass marks showing the position of the ancient intramural street system. Also visible are the two main excavation zones: the temple east of the forum (under right) and the West Gate (centre left).

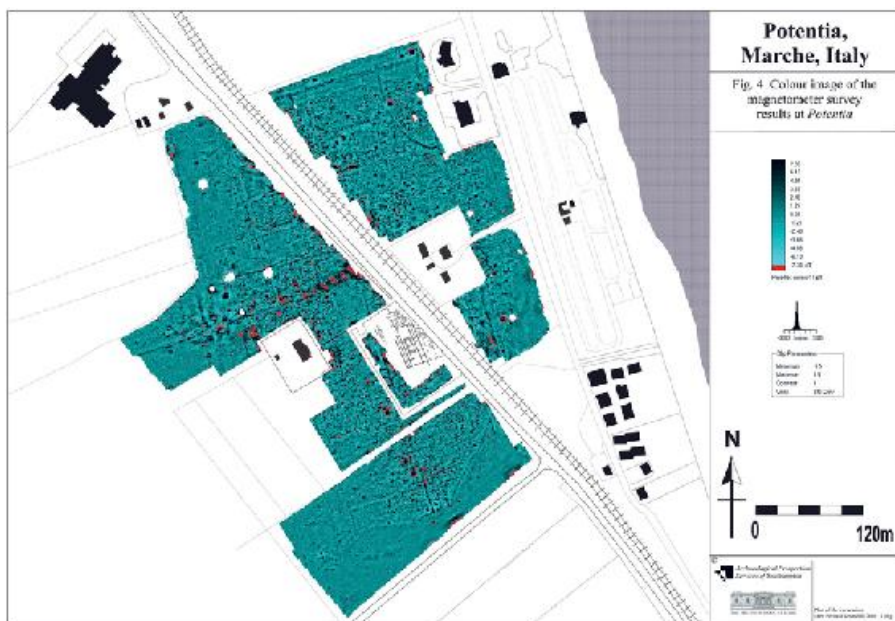


Figure 3.3 Results of electromagnetic surveys on Potentia between 2004 and 2007 (Image: APSS)

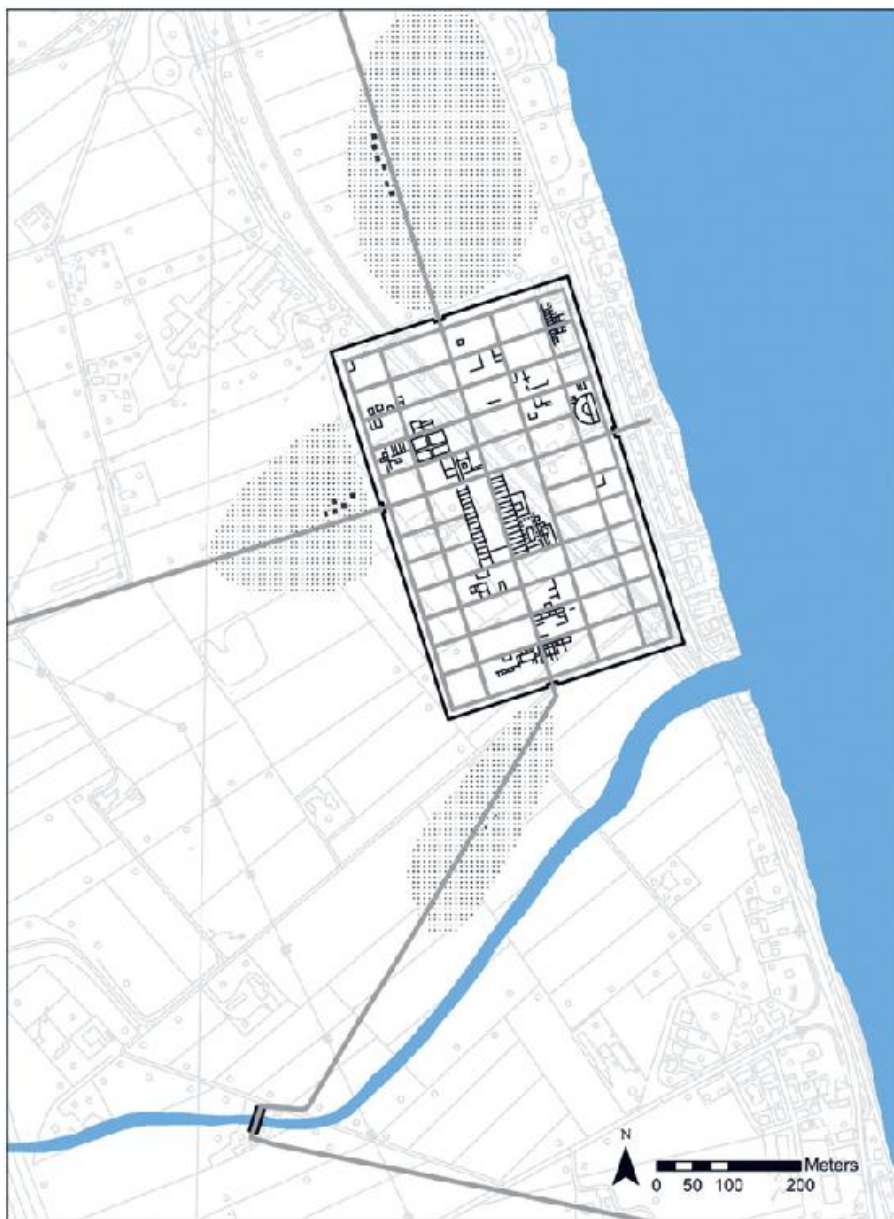


Figure 3.4 Simplified general plan of the town of Potentia, with its surrounding roads and cemeteries and the presumed Roman mouth of the river Flosis (Drawn by author)

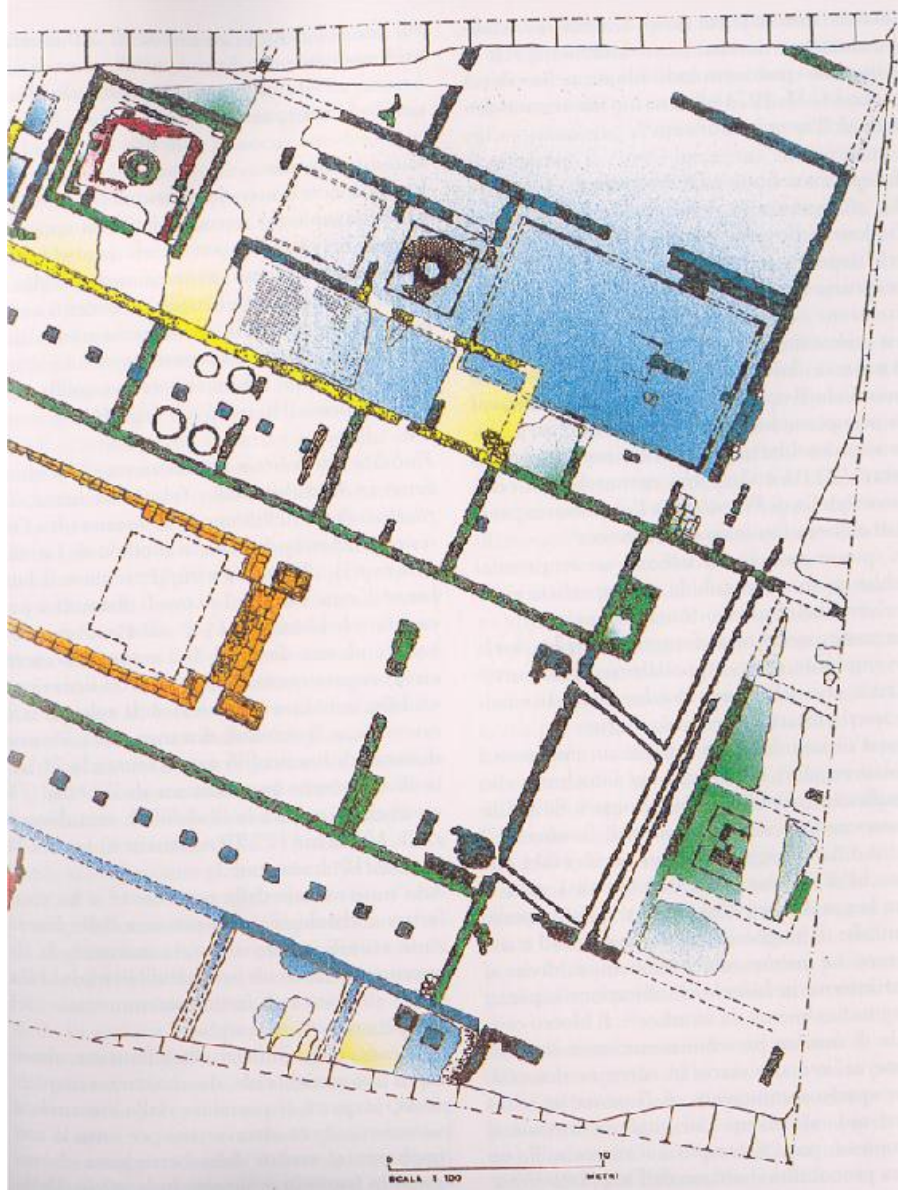


Figure 3.6 Extract from the excavation plan of the temple area (southern part) with (in green) the major late Roman transformations of this public space (Percossi Serenelli 2001)

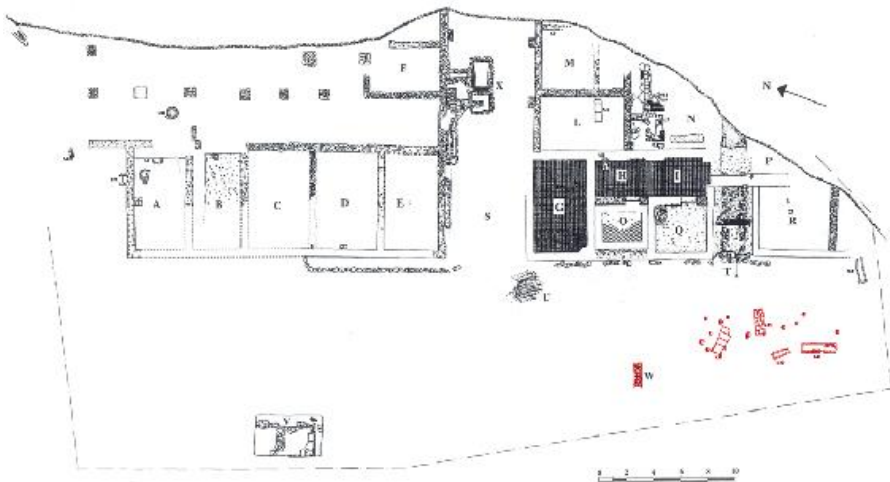


Figure 3.7 Potentia: Plan of the partially excavated houses near the north-east corner of the city, with remains of fifth- and sixth-century burials on the location of former streets (after Mercado 1979)



Figure 3.8 Potentia: View of the 2008 excavations in the area of the West Gate, with remains of an early medieval phase of the decumanus maximus and (to the left) parts of the late Roman phase of the gate, built with spolia



Figure 5.4 *Photograph of a destruction level in the forum of Pollentia (Alcudia, Mallorca) (Photo by Pollentia archaeological team)*



Figure 5.6 Photograph of the late antique fortification of the Pollentia forum (Photo by Pollentia archaeological team)



Figure 6.1 Coin of Leovigild minted at Recopolis and found in Mérida
(Photo: Consorcio Ciudad Monumental de Mérida, after Olmo 2006)



Figure 6.3 Aerial photograph of the excavated area of the city of Recopolis (Photo: after Olmo 2006)



Figure 6.11 Dwellings and workshops facing onto the public thoroughfare and adjacent to the ecclesiastical complex at Recopolis (Photo: C. Siero)



Figure 7.4 Cyrene: Magnetometer in use in Area 6 (Photo: CAP)

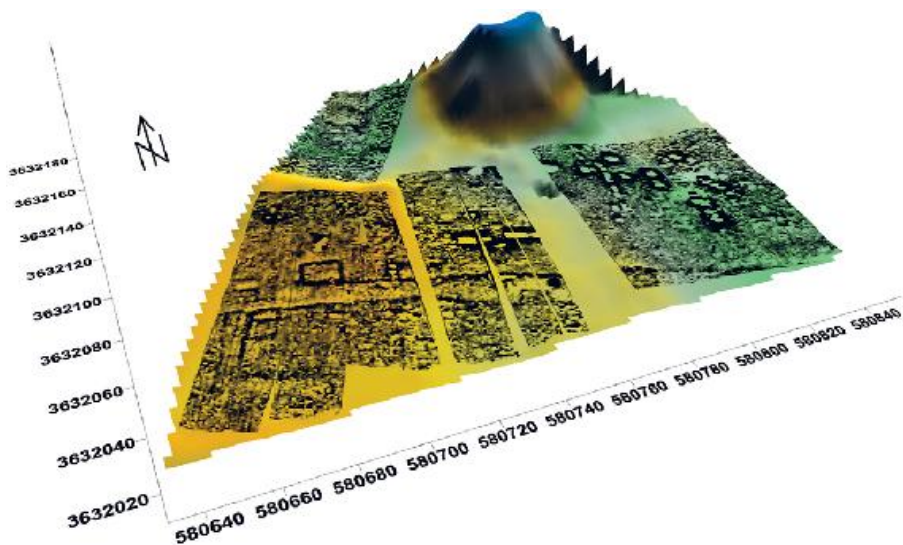


Figure 7.6 Cyrene: Digital Elevation Model of Area 6 with overlaid magnetometry data

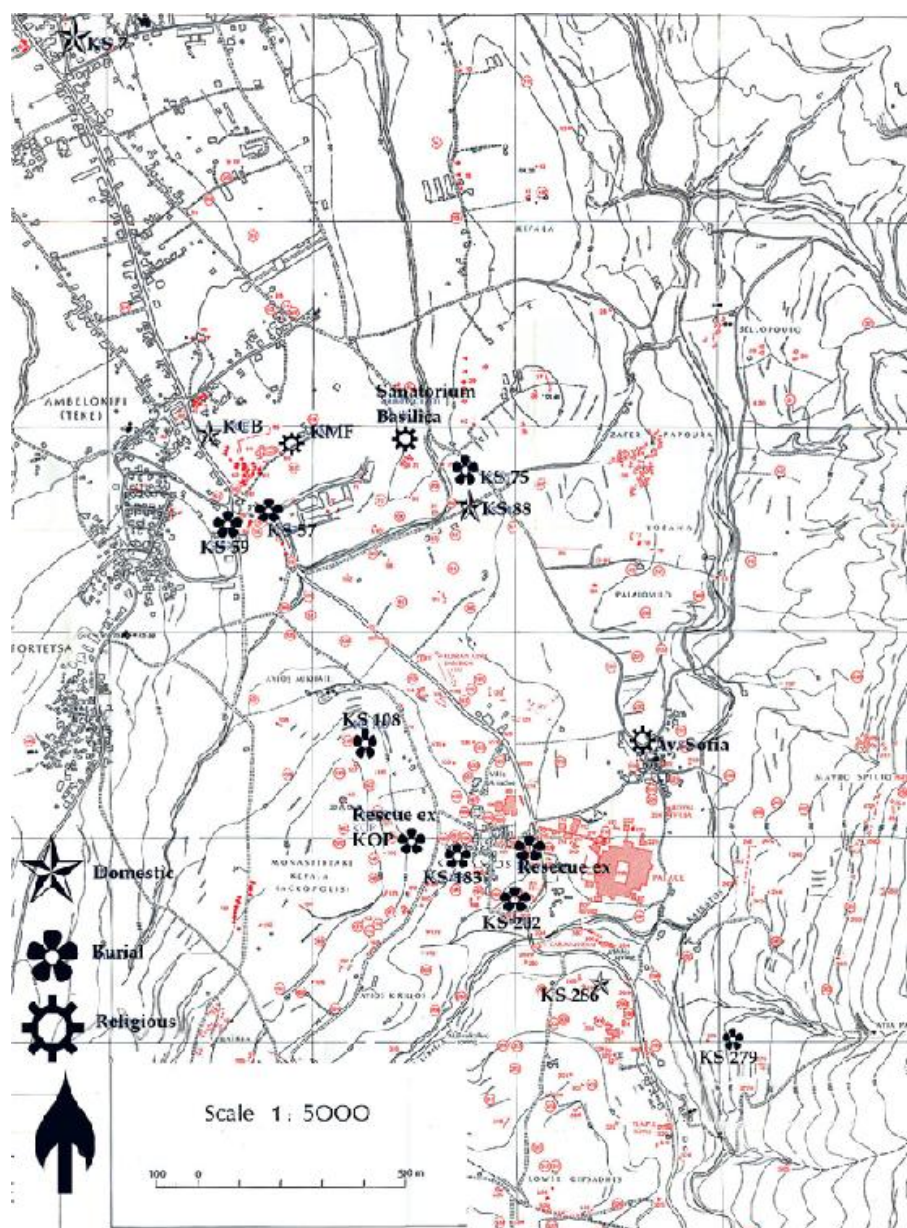


Figure 9.1 Plan of Knossos (After Hood and Smyth 1981, courtesy of the British School at Athens)



Figure 9.5 View of the fertile Knossos Valley over the Vlikhia river looking north-east towards the Ailias Mountains (Photo: author)



Figure 10.2 Hierapolis: Middle Byzantine houses built upon the first-century Frontinus Street (Photo: author)



Figure 10.11 Seldjuk tent footings built against a Roman wall. A pit-hearth lies to the right (Photo: author)



Figure 11.2 *Dura-Europos, House C7-C entrance (Photo: author, 2005)*

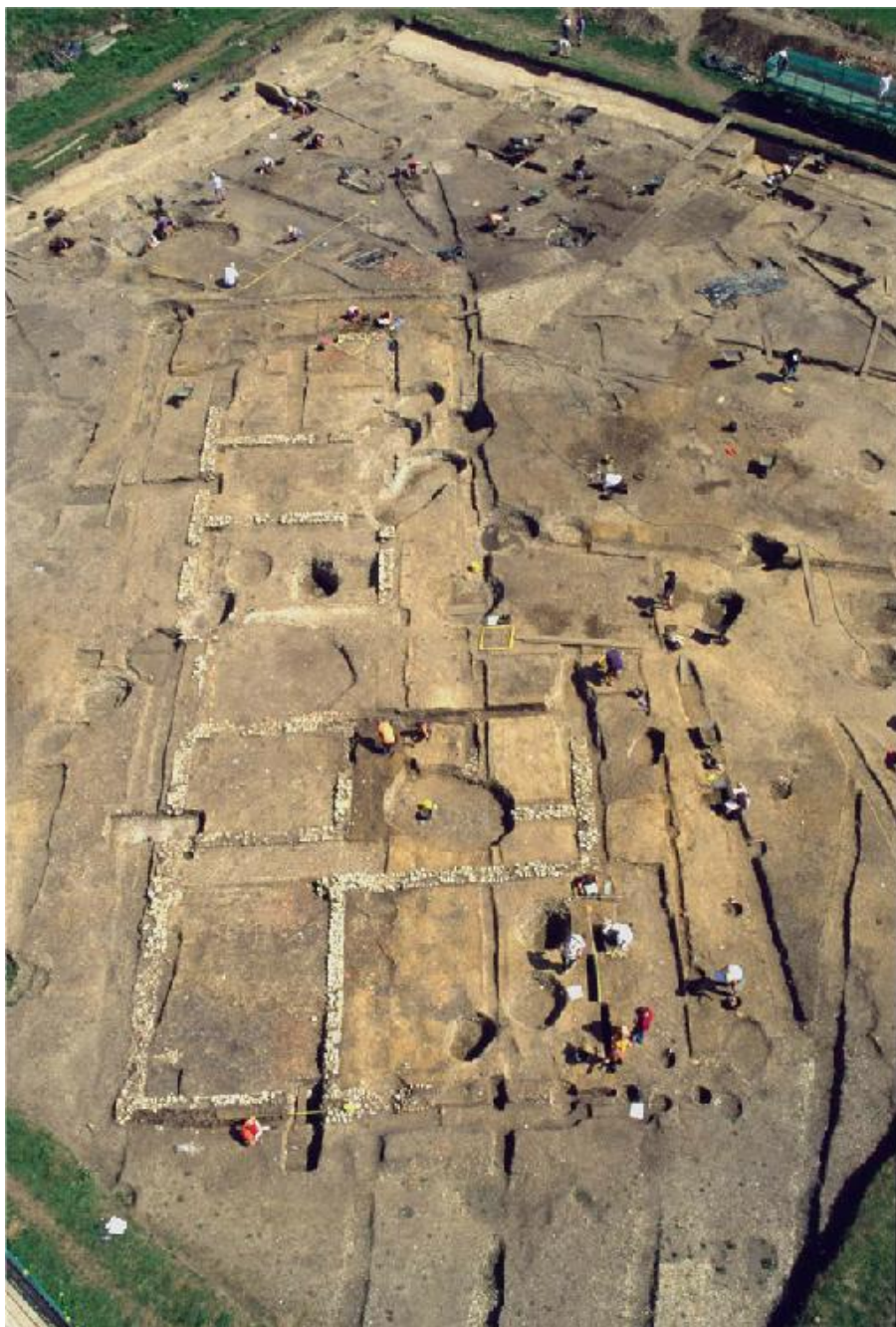


Figure 12.3 *Silchester: Aerial photograph of Insula IX, House 1 under excavation in 2002*

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